

AN
INTRODUCTION

TO THE STUDY OF THE

PROPHECIES

Concerning the CHRISTIAN CHURCH;

AND, IN PARTICULAR,

Concerning the Church of PAPAL ROME:

IN TWELVE SERMONS,

PREACHED IN LINCOLN'S-INN-CHAPEL

AT THE LECTURE OF

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Lord Bishop of GLOUCESTER.

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*Ita, si potuero, stylo moderabor meo, ut nec ea, quæ supersint,
dicam; nec ea, quæ satis sint, prætermittam.*

Augustin. C. D. l. xvii. c. 1.

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C O N T E N T S

OF THE

S E C O N D V O L U M E.

S E R M O N VII.

Prophecies concerning Antichrist.

I Ep. JOHN ii. 18.

—*ye have beared, that Antichrist shall come.*

Page 1.

S E R M O N VIII.

Prejudices against the doctrine of Anti-
christ.

I Ep. JOHN ii 18.

—*Ye have beared, that Antichrist shall
come.*

P. 42.

A 3

S E R.

CONTENTS OF

SERMON IX.

The prophetic style considered.

EZEKIEL XX. 49.

— *They say of me, Doth he not speak
Parables?* P. 77.

SERMON X.

The style and method of the Apocalypse.

EZEKIEL XX. 49.

— *They say of me, Doth he not speak
Parables?* P. 110.

SERMON XI.

Prophetic characters of Antichrist.

LUKE xli. 56.

— *How is it, that ye do not discern this time?*
P. 141.

SER.

THE SECOND VOLUME. vii

S E R M O N XII.

- Uses of this inquiry into the prophecies — Conclusion.

REV. xxii. 7.

Behold, I come quickly: Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

P. 197.

S E R.

THE SECOND VOLUME.

SERMON XII.

Use of this inquiry into the prophe-
cies — Conclusion.

REV. MR. J.

Beloved, I come quickly: blessed is he that
keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this
book.
P. 197

SER.

S E R M O N VII.

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST.

1 Ep. JOHN ii. 18.

*—Ye have heard that Antichrist shall
come—*

AMONG the more remarkable prophecies concerning the Christian Church, there are several, which describe the rise, progress, and downfall of a certain Power, represented under various symbols or images, and distinguished by many appellations; but more especially known by the name of ANTICHRIST.

These prophecies come now, in the order of this Lecture, to be considered. The subject is, in a high degree, curious and important; but of no easy discussion:

VOL. II.

B

not

2 Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST.

not so much on the account of any peculiar difficulty in the prophecies themselves, as from the prejudice of party in *explaining* them, and still more, from the general prejudice that lies against every *attempt* to explain them.

To make my way through all these obstructions, I shall begin with laying before you a clear and distinct state of the question itself, which is chiefly agitated by inquirers into these prophecies.

It is admitted, that many predictions in the Old and New Testament, particularly in the book of Daniel, in St. Paul's Epistles, and in the Revelations of St. John, clearly point out a very extraordinary power, which was to manifest itself *in the latter times*, that is, in the times subsequent to the introduction of Christianity. The characters, by which this power (acknowledged by all under the name of Antichrist) is chiefly distinguished, are those of *Tyranny* [a],

[a] By the word *Tyranny*, here, and elsewhere in these discourses, as applied to the Pope, I would be
Idolatry,

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 3

Idolatry, and Intolerance. And, to abridge our trouble in searching after this *three-headed* monster, we are directed by the prophets to look for him within the boundaries of what was properly called, the Roman Empire, and even in the city of Rome itself.

Thus far there is no dispute. The only question is, To what Roman power, exhibiting those characters, the prophecies are to be applied. And even this question is reduced within narrow limits. For two Powers only have subsisted in Rome from the Christian æra to the present times (within which period we are, again, allowed to expect the reign of Antichrist); the Roman Emperor, in the first place; and, afterwards, the Roman Pontiffs. So that,

understood to mean that *super-eminent dominion*, which he exercised, or claimed a right of exercising, over the princes and states of his communion, in all affairs both temporal and spiritual.—I use the word (somewhat improperly perhaps) for the sake of brevity, as I know of no other single term, that so well expresses my meaning.

4 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

on the whole, the single point in debate is merely this, Whether Imperial, or Papal Rome, be that Antichristian Power, which the prophets foretold. The church of Rome holds, for obvious reasons, that the *Imperial* power is the object of the prophecies : the Protestants have, on the contrary, their reasons for maintaining, that *Papal* Rome is that power, which the prophecies had in view, and in which alone they are truly and properly verified.

This, then, is the meaning of that famous inquiry concerning Antichrist : and I must desire you to keep your attention steadily fixed on the question, as here stated ; while I endeavour to furnish you with the proper means of deciding upon it.

The obvious method of doing this would be, To lay before you, directly, the prophecies themselves, and to examine them by the light of sober criticism, and authentic history. But, because it is no new or difficult thing to misrepresent *facts*, and to misinterpret *scripture*, to pervert, in short, these

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 5

these two instruments of truth to any ends, which prejudice hath in view; and because I know how natural it is for you to suspect such management in the present case, where the zeal of party is supposed, on either side, to exclude, or over-power, the love of truth; for *these reasons*, it may be convenient to take a larger compass, and, by a previous historical deduction of this controversy, to let you see in what light it has been regarded, through the several ages of the Christian Church.

I. THE FIRST ACCOUNT, we meet with in scripture, of the power in question, I mean, under his proper name of *Antichrist*, is in the first epistle of St. John, from which the text is taken. The whole passage runs thus—*Little children, it is the last time: And, as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

6 Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST.

To understand these words, we must call to mind what hath been already, more than once, observed concerning the scriptural division of time into two great portions, The FORMER, and LATTER times. By the *former*, is meant the times preceding the Christian æra: by the *latter*, the times subsequent to it. Correspondent to this partition of time, is the double advent of Christ, of which I before gave a distinct idea. His *first* advent was, when he came in the flesh at Jerusalem: his *second* advent is to be understood of his coming in his kingdom, through all the ages of the Christian Church.

But though the *latter times*, in the general sense of scripture, be thus comprehensive, they are further subdivided into other constituent portions, in which some particular state of Christ's kingdom is administered, and within which it is completed. In reference to this subordinate division of time in the Christian dispensation, the *coming* of Christ is, also, proportionably

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. ¶

portionably multiplied. He *comes* in each division; that is, as oft as he thinks fit to interpose by any signal act of his power and providence. The whole period, in which any distinct state of his kingdom is carrying on, is likewise called *the latter time*; and the concluding part of that period is distinguished by the name of the *last hour*: as if the whole of each period were considered as *one day*; and the close of each period, as the end, or *last hour*, of that day.

Thus, the time that elapsed from Christ's ascension to the destruction of Jerusalem, being one of the subdivisions before mentioned, is called the *latter times*; and the eve of its destruction, is called the *last hour*. He *was coming* through the whole time: he *came* in the end of it. And the like use of these terms is to be made, in other instances. We are to apply them in the same manner to the *reign of Antichrist—to the Millennium—to the day of judgment*. Each of these states, into which the *latter times*,

8 Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST.

or the times of Christianity, are divided, is likewise spoken of under the idea of the *latter times*; and the season, in which each is drawing to an end, is the *last hour* of that state [b].

Thus much being premised, it is easy to give a just exposition of the text. *Little children, it is the last time, or hour*—that is, the destruction of Jerusalem is at hand; as indeed it followed very soon after the date of this Epistle. *And, as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come*—that, in some future period, called *the last times*, an hostile power, which we know by the name of Antichrist, shall arise and prevail in the world, *even now*, we may see the commencement of that power; for, *there are*

[b] What is here said of the scriptural division of *time*, with regard to the affairs of the *Church*, is enough for my purpose. There is another division of time, in the prophetic scriptures, with regard to the *kingdoms of the world*; concerning which the reader may consult BISHOP KIDDER's *Dem. of the Messiah*, Part iii, ch. ix.; and especially Mr. MEDE's *Apostacy of the latter times*, ch. xi.

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 9

many Antichrists; many persons, now, appear in the spirit of that future Antichrist, and deserve his name: *whereby*, indeed, *we know that it is the last hour*: for Christ himself had made the appearance of false Christs and false prophets, that is, of Antichrists, to be one of the signs by which that *hour* should be distinguished [*c*].

The meaning of the whole passage, then, is clearly this: "That the appearance of *false Christs* and *false Prophets* (of which there were many, according to our Lord's prediction, in St. John's time) indicated the arrival of that *hour*, that was to be fatal to the Jewish state: and that they were, at the same time, the types and forerunners of a still more dreadful power, which should be fully revealed in *the latter times*, in a future period, when that calamity was past. For the truth of the assertion, That such a power should arise in the Christian church, he appeals to a tradition, then current among the disciples:

[*c*] Matth. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 21.

and

10 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

and his hated name of *Antichrist* is here applied, by way of anticipation, to the false prophets of that time; as possessing much of his character, and acting with his spirit.

Hence we see the meaning of the word *Antichrist*; which stands for a person or power, actuated with a spirit opposite to that of Christ. And so indeed the Apostle explains himself, in another place of this very Epistle. For, speaking of certain false teachers, who preached up a doctrine, contrary to that of the Gospel, he adds—
“ This is that *spirit* of Antichrist, whereof
“ ye have heard that it should come, and
“ even now already is it in the world [*d*].”
And I lay the greater stress on this observation, because the etymology of the word *Antichrist* makes it capable of two different meanings. For it may either signify one, who *assumes the place and office of Christ*, or one, who *maintains a direct enmity and oppo-*

[*d*] 1 Ep. John, iv. 3.

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. II

stion to him [e]. But the *latter* is the sense in which the Apostle useth this term; although it be true that, in the *former* sense, it very well suits the Bishop of Rome, who calls himself the *Vicar* of Christ, as well as the successor of St. Peter. Nor can there be any difficulty in fixing the charge of Antichristianism, in the sense of *an enmity and opposition to Christ*, on the Roman Pontif (though I know how absurd the attempt seems to the writers on that side;) for, to merit this charge, it is not necessary that he should formally reject Christ, which undoubtedly he does not, but that he should act in defiance to the true genius and character of Christ's religion: a charge, which may be evidently made good against him.

In short, as the word, *Christ*, is frequently used in the Apostolic writings for the *doctrine* of Christ; in which sense we are said to *put on Christ*, to *grow in Christ*,

[e] Ἀντικριστός—ἀντὶ, in the sense either of *pro* or *contra*.

12 Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST.

to learn *Christ*, and in other instances : So *Antichrist*, in the abstract, may be taken for a doctrine subversive of the Christian ; and when applied to a particular man, or body of men, it denotes *one*, who sets himself against the *spirit* of that doctrine [f].

[f] Grotius says, “ Sicut *Anticæsa*rem dicimus, qui contra Cæsarem se Cæsarem vult dici atque Cæsar haberi, sic *Antichristus* est qui se vero Christo opponit eo modo ut ipse Christus haberi velit,” OP. t. iv. p. 490. — The learned commentator did not reflect, that words are not always used according to the strict import of their etymologies. *False Christs*, we will say, are, in the strict sense of the word, *Antichrists*. But the question is, in *what* sense this word is used of the person called, by way of eminence, THE ANTICHRIST. This must be collected from the attributes given to him in the prophecies themselves, not from the rigorous etymology of the term. The case was plainly this. St. John is speaking of the *false Christs*, who had appeared in his time ; and, to disgrace them the more effectually in the minds of those to whom he writes, he brands them with the name of *Antichrists* : not so much respecting the exact sense of the word, as the ideas of aversion, which, he knew, it would excite. For the tradition of the church concerning *Antichrist*, had made this appellation, of all others, the most opprobrious, and hateful.—Besides, it is not so clear, as Grotius

In

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 13

In this last sense, the word *Antichrist* is clearly employed by St. John : and from his example, the word grew into general use in the Christian church ; and is so to be understood, whenever mention is made of Antichrist by the primitive fathers, or any other ecclesiastical writers.

II. I am now to shew in what manner the prophecies concerning *Antichrist*, or a person or power, so called, and, though variously described, always considered under the idea of an adversary to the true doctrine of Christ, have been construed and applied by many eminent members of the Christian Church, in all ages.

supposes, that the strict sense of the word, *Antichristus*, must be—*is, qui se vero Christo opponit eo modo ut ipse Christus haberi velit.* Cæsar, who generally expressed himself with exact propriety, thought fit, on a certain occasion, to assume the name and character of ANTI-CATO. Was it Cæsar's purpose to say, or was it his ambition to pretend, “*that he opposed himself to the true Cato, EO MODO ut ipse CATO haberi vellet?*”

I. When

14 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

1. When the canon of scripture was formed, and now in the hands of the faithful, the prophecies concerning Antichrist were too remarkable not to take their early attention. They accordingly cite these prophecies in their apologies and commentaries, or refer to them, very frequently. But one thing is singular. Though Antichrist be every where spoken of in the prophecies as a persecuting power, and though the Christian church then was, and so continued to be for near three centuries, in a state of persecution under the Roman emperors, yet this opprobrious name was not usually given to their persecutors. I do not say, that none of the early Christian writers ever applied that character to the Emperors. Some few of them, in a fit of zeal and resentment, did [g]. But the most,

[g] Eusebius mentions, JUDAS, H. E. l. vi. c. 2; and DIONYSIUS, E. H. l. vii. c. 10.—Others, seemed to expect that Antichrist would appear as the Messiah of the Jews; but in the person of a Roman Emperor; as will be explained presently. See the next note.

and

and the ablest of the Fathers, were clearly of another opinion.

It may be thought, that they forbore this application of so odious a term, out of respect to the government under which they lived, and from prudential considerations. These motives had, without doubt, their weight with them, and made them more cautious, than they would otherwise have been, in interpreting the prophecies. But, if they had been at liberty to speak out, and declare their full sense, on the subject, it is certain they would not, and could not, consistently with their avowed principles, apply the prophecies concerning Antichrist to the Roman Emperors. For they had learned from tradition, and from the letter of the prophecies, that Antichrist was to be revealed in some distant age; and they even collected from a remarkable passage in one of St. Paul's Epistles (which will be considered hereafter) that the removal of the Roman empire was to make way for his appearance. Hence, they

16 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

they give it as a reason for their ardent prayers to heaven for the preservation of the empire, that the dreaded power of Antichrist could not commence, so long as the Imperial sovereignty subsisted. And it is observable that, of those few writers, who were in different sentiments, the greater part conceived the time of his coming to be *remote*; and were even driven to the strange necessity of supposing that Nero, the first persecuting Emperor, was miraculously kept alive, or would be raised up from the dead, in order to be revealed in a future age, as the Antichrist of the prophets, or at least as the *Precursor* of Antichrist [b].

In short, the idea, which the early Christians, in general, formed of Antichrist, was that of a power, to be revealed in distant times, after the dissolution of the Roman empire; of a power, to arise out of the ruins of that empire. Not to multiply quotations, on a point which admits no doubt,

[b] See many citations to this purpose in Dr. Lardner's *Cred.* p. ii. v. p. 210—212.

Jerom,

Jerom, the ablest of the antient Fathers, and the most esteemed, shall speak for the rest. He says expressly, that such was the idea of *all the ecclesiastical writers*, down to his time, as is here represented [i].

Now this circumstance ye will surely think not a little remarkable, that they, who lived under the emperors, and felt the whole weight of their tyrannous persecution, should not apply the prophetic notes and characters of Antichrist, to *them*, if indeed the prophecies had been fairly capable of such application. This, I say, is exceedingly remarkable: for men are but too apt even to wrest the scriptures to a sense, which favours their own cause, or gratifies their passions; and to find a completion of prophecy in events, which fall out in their own days and concern themselves (as we see from so many absurd applications of the Apocalypse, justly objected to certain Protestant writers); though, when such events are past, and

[i] Jerom, in Dan. vii. Mede, p. 657.

18 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

impartially considered, no such accomplishment of prophecy can be discerned in them.

When the church of Rome, therefore, now pretends, that Antichrist is to be sought in Imperial and Pagan Rome, ye will naturally ask how it came to pass, that the antient fathers, who had the best opportunity of seeing the conformity of the prophecies with the transactions of their times, and were so much interested in those transactions, should yet overlook such conformity, if it had been real, and fairly marked out by the prophecies, when interpreters of these days are so quick-sighted? And to this question, no just and satisfactory answer can be given, but that, in the opinion of those fathers, the characters of Antichrist were not sufficiently applicable to the Roman emperors; or, if they were, that certain express clauses in the prophecies themselves forbade that application of them. Either way, their conduct forms a strong presumption, that the Antichrist

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 19

of the prophets was not, and could not be, the Roman Emperor.

I know indeed, that, when the empire became Christian, and factions sprang up in the church, the name of Antichrist, as a term of reproach, was not unfrequently bestowed on such of the emperors as had made themselves obnoxious to the orthodox party. But this flippancy of language proves nothing but the passion of the men who indulged themselves in it, unless it be, that this term of reproach was thought better suited to an ecclesiastic, than a civil power: for, the Emperor being now the head of the Christian church, his persecutions of the faith were deemed the more *Antichristian*, as they especially disgraced his *religious character*. And how natural this idea was, I mean the idea of *Antichrist*, as intended by the prophets of a *religious*, not civil power, we may learn from the history of the schisms, which afterwards distracted the church under the papacy;

20 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

when the Antipopes very liberally and constantly branded each other with the name of *Antichrist*: as if they had found a peculiar aptness in the prophetic language to express ecclesiastical tyranny and usurpation.

But, whatever use we may make of these facts, it is clear, on all hands, that the Roman Emperor, *as such*, was thought to have no concern in the predictions concerning Antichrist; at least, that the more intelligent Christian writers of the three first centuries had no idea of his having any such concern in them: while, yet, they held very unanimously, that some future power was to arise in the church, in which those predictions would be completed.

II. This, in general, was the state of the controversy concerning Antichrist, till the down-fall of the Western empire; when the Bishop of Rome reared his head, and by degrees found means, amidst the
I ruins

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 21

ruins of that mighty power, to advance himself into the sovereignty of Rome, and, at length, of the Christian world: fixing his residence in the very seat and throne of the Cæsars. It remains to see, in what light the reign of Antichrist was, thenceforth, considered by many eminent members of that church, which now called itself, and was, in a manner, *universal*. In other words, we are to inquire, now that the imperial power, which the fathers would not acknowledge to be Antichristian, had deserted Rome, whether the papal power, which took its place on *the seven hills*, did not, in the opinion of sober men, fill up all the measures of the prophetic characters, and perfectly correspond to that idea.

1. So early as about the close of the sixth century, Gregory the first, or, the *Great*, as he is usually called, the most revered, and in some respects not undeservedly so, of all the Roman pontiffs, in a famous dis-

22 Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST.

pute with the Bishop of Constantinople, who had taken to himself the title of *Oecumenical*, or Universal Bishop, objects to him the arrogance and presumption of this claim, and treats him, on that account, as the fore-runner, at least, of Antichrist. His words are remarkable enough to be here quoted. *I affirm it confidently*, says He, *that whoever calls himself Universal Bishop, or is desirous to be so called, demonstrates himself, by this pride and elation of heart, to be the fore-runner of Antichrist* [k]. And, again, *From this presumption of his* [in taking the name of Universal Bishop] *what else can be collected, but that the times of Antichrist are now at hand* [l]?

It is to be observed of this Gregory, that he disclaimed, for himself, the title of Universal Bishop, as well as refused it to

[k] Quisquis se universalem vocat, vel vocari desiderat, in elatione suâ Antichristum præcurrit. GREG. M. Op. Ep. 30. l. vi. Par. 1533.

[l] In hac ejus superbiâ, quid aliud nisi propinqua jam Antichristi esse tempora designatur? Ep. 34. l. iv.

his

his aspiring brother of Constantinople. How consistently he did this, when at the same time he exercised an authority, which can only belong to that exalted character, it is not my business to inquire. Perhaps, he did not advert to the consequence of his own actions: perhaps, like an able man, he meant to secure the thing, without troubling himself about the name: perhaps, he was jealous of a rival to this claim of catholic authority, and would not permit the Bishop of Constantinople to decorate himself with a title, which was likely to be favourable to the pretensions of that see, and injurious to his own. Whatever the reasons of his conduct were, the *fact* is, as I here represent it; and clearly shews that, in the judgment of this renowned Roman Bishop, Antichrist had not yet been revealed in the person of the Roman Emperor; and, if ever he were to be revealed, that not a civil, but ecclesiastical character, agreed best with the prophetic descriptions of him [*m*].

[*m*] With all his merits, Gregory the Great, it is to

24 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

2. Pope Boniface III. had not, it seems, the scruples, whatever they were, of his predecessor, Gregory. He readily accepted, or rather importunately begged, this proud title of *Oecumenical Bishop*, from the Emperor, Phocas; and transmitted it to all his successors. And now, it might be expected, that the Bishop of Rome would be Antichrist, in his turn. But, such was the fortune of that see, or the devotion of the faithful to it, that this charge was not presently brought against him: as if the spirit of dominion, which had so long possessed that city, were a thing of course, and could not misbecome the Bishop of Rome, though it looked so *Antichristian* in him of Constantinople.

Other reasons concurred to save the honour of the papal chair. Its authority be feared, had some Antichristian marks upon him; and his adversary of the East might have gone some way towards *fixing* them upon his *Grandeur*, if he had but observed, that Antichrist, whoever he was, and whensoever to appear in the world, is clearly marked out in the prophecies, as having his seat in *old Rome*.

grew,

grew, every day, more absolute : and the tradition of the church (which had hitherto been the chief support of the doctrine concerning Antichrist) gradually sunk under the apprehension of that power, to which alone it could, with any apparent propriety, be applied : while the ignorance of the times became such, that, except perhaps in the minds of some few retainers to the see of Rome, there was scarce light enough left in the Christian world to point out the meaning of the prophecies ; if it's gross superstition would have otherwise permitted the application of them to the sacred person of the Pope.

3. Under the cover of all these advantages, *the Man of Sin* had a convenient time to display himself, and to grow up into that full size and stature, in which he could no longer be overlooked, or mistaken, by those who had any knowledge of the prophecies, or skill in applying them. Accordingly we find that at the synod of Rheims, held in the Xth century [n], Ar-

[n] A. 991.

nulphus,

26 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

Arnulphus, Bishop of Orleans, appealed to the whole council, whether the Bishop of Rome were not the Antichrist of the prophets; *sitting in the temple of God*; and perfectly corresponding to the marks, which St. Paul had given of him. In particular, speaking of John the XVth, who then governed the church of Rome, he apostrophized the assembly in these words—
 “What think ye, reverend Fathers, of this man, seated on a lofty throne, and shining in purple and gold? Whom do ye account him to be? Surely, if destitute of charity, and puffed up with the pride of science only, He is ANTICHRIST, *sitting in the temple of God, and shewing himself that he is God* [o].”

[o] Quid hunc, reverendi patres, in sublimi folio residentem, veste purpureâ et aureâ radiantem; quid hunc, inquam, esse censetis? Nimirum, si charitate destituitur, solâque scientiâ inflatur et extollitur, ANTI-CHRISTUS est, *in templo Dei sedens, et se ostendens tanquam sit Deus.* USSER. *de Christian. Eccl. successionē & statu*, c. ii. p. 36. Lond. 1613.—ILLYRICI *Cat. Test. Ver.* p. 1558. *Officin. Jacob. Stœr et Jacob. Chouët.*
 —This Arnulph, Bishop of Orleans, was esteemed, in

4. In the former part of the XIth century, Berengarius, a man of principal note in those days, and distinguished by his free writings concerning the Eucharist, went so far as to call the church of Rome, *the seat of Satan* (which is but another apocalyptic name of Antichrist;) and to know from what source he derived this language, we need only reflect, that, in the catalogue of his works, we find a treatise written by him expressly on the book of Revelations [p].

As this century advanced, the papal power rose to its height. And all the characters of Antichrist glared so strongly in the person of Hildebrand, who took the

his day, the wisest and most eloquent of all the Gallican prelates, Arnulphus—de quo sic initio ejus synodi scriptum est—*Inter omnes Galliarum episcopos sapientiâ et eloquentiâ clarissimus habebatur.* Ib.

[p] “*Ecclesiam vanitatis, & SEDEM SATANÆ vocabat.*” USSER. *de Christian. Eccl. success. & statu*, c. 7. f. xxiv. p. 196.—In Apocalypsin scripsisse testatur Bostoniensis. CAVE, H. L. vol. ii. p. 131. Oxon. 1743:

name

28 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

name of Gregory VIIth, that the Romish historian, Joannes Aventinus, speaks of it as a point, *in which the generality of fair, candid, and ingenuous writers, were agreed, That THEN began the empire of Antichrist* [q].

5. Pascal II, who had been brought up at the feet of Hildebrand, and sat upon the papal throne in the beginning of the XIIth century, was treated with as little ceremony as his master had been; particularly, by Fluentius, Bishop of Florence, and by the whole church of Liege [r].

St. Bernard, too, the most eminent person of that age, was so struck with the marks of Antichristianism in the church of Rome (to which, however, in other respects, he was enough devoted) that he

[q] *Plerique omnes boni, aperti, iusti, ingenui, simplices, tum imperium Antichristi cœpisse, quod ea quæ Christus servator noster tot annos ante nobis cantavit, evenisse eo tempore cernebant, memoriæ literarum prodidère. ANNAL. BOIORUM, l. v. p. 591. Ingolstadt. 1554.*

[r] CAVE, H. L. vol. ii. p. 258. Conc. Flor. 1104. USSER. *De Christi Eccl. succ. & stat.* c. v. s. v. p. 109.
employed

employed all the thunder of his rhetoric (in which faculty he excelled) against its corruptions; exclaiming, *that the ministers of Christ were become the servants of Antichrist; and that the beast of the Apocalypse had seated himself in the chair of St. Peter* [s].

[s] MINISTRI CHRISTI SUNT, ET SERVIUNT ANTICHRISTO [*Serm. sup. Cantic. xxxiii.*]—It is true, by Antichrist, he seems not to mean the Pope, but, in general, an evil principle, which then domineered in the church. Yet he refers us to the famous passage in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, ch. ii. And he tells us in his 56th epistle, that he had heard one Norbert, a man of exemplary piety, say, That Antichrist would be revealed in that age. Hence it seems probable, that some one person or power was in his eye. After all, he says, that Norbert's reasons did not satisfy him. Yet, in another epistle, he asserts expressly—*Bestia illa de Apocalypsi, cui datum est os loquens blasphemias, et bellum gerere cum sanctis, PETRI CATHEDRAM OCCUPAT, tanquam leo paratus ad prædā. Ep. cxxv*: which was, in other words, to call the Pope, Antichrist. It is evident that St. Bernard applied the prophecies in the Revelation to the successor of St. Peter.—I mention these things so particularly, to shew, what his sentiments on this head really were; which have been misrepresented by hasty writers, who transcribe from each other, without examining, themselves, the authorities they quote.

But

30 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

But this charge was now so general, and founded so high, that it reached the ears of *others*, besides prelates, and churchmen. Historians relate, that it made an impression on our military king, Richard I; who, being at Messina in Sicily, in his way to the Holy Land, and hearing much of the learned Abbot Joachim of Calabria, (a man, famous in those times for his warm invectives against the Roman hierarchy;) had the curiosity to take a lecture from him on this subject. His text was, *Antichrist*, and the *Apocalypse*; which he explained in so pointed and forcible a manner, as was much to the satisfaction, we are told, of his royal auditor [1].

[1] CAVE, H. L. vol. ii. p. 278. ROG. DE HOVEDEN, ANNAL. *Part post.* p. 681. ed. Franc. 1601.— In this age [XIIth] was composed a very remarkable tract on the subject of Antichrist, which may be seen in Mede's Works, p. 721.—Mr. Mede supposes, and seems indeed to have proved, that the *true* doctrine of Antichrist was, and was intended to be, a mystery, or secret, till the 12th century. Whence it follows that the testimonies, hitherto alledged, are only passionate

6. The

6. The first appearance of the people, called Waldenses or Albigenfes, was in this age ; but, in the next, the XIIIth cen-

or declamatory exaggerations, or to be esteemed, as he says, *pro parabolicè et nat' αυξαν διδῆς, declamatorum more.* Works, p. 722.

I admit the truth of the observation ; but hold, that the *use* of the deduction, here made, is not in the least affected by it. For my purpose in giving this catalogue of witnesses to the doctrine of Antichrist, was not to *justify* that doctrine, in the *true*, that is, Protestant sense of it (for then, not only the preceding testimonies, but even some of the following, would have been omitted) but merely to shew that the general, at least, and confused idea of some such doctrine did, in fact, *subsist* in the antient Christian church. That what idea they had of this doctrine was founded on the *prophecies*, is clear from the terms in which they express themselves. And, though the doctrine itself was very imperfectly conceived, and inconsequentially applied by them, still their language shews that they had some notion of *a corrupt spiritual power, which was, in their sense of the prophets, to domineer in the church of Rome*: whence I draw this conclusion (for the sake of which, this whole deduction is made,) That the present application of the prophecies concerning Antichrist to papal Rome, is not wholly new and unauthorized ; as the prejudice, I am here combating, supposeth it to be.

ture,

32 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

ture, they prevailed to that degree, that Crusades and Inquisitions were thought little enough to be employed against them. We may know what the guilt of this people was, when we understand from their books, and from the testimony of the great historian, Thuanus, that a leading principle of their heresy was, To treat the Pope as *Antichrist*; and the church of Rome, as *Babylon*; on the authority of the prophecies contained in the Revelation [*u*].

Other [*w*] testimonies occur in the history of this age. But I must not omit that of

[*u*] VITRINGA in Apoc. p. 747. Amst. 1719. USSER. De Eccl. succ. & stat. c. vi. & viii. THUANUS, l. vi. f. xvi. vol. i. p. 221. ed. Buckley.

[*w*] See, especially, the famous speech of Everhard, bishop of Saltzbourg, at the assembly of Ratisbonne, in the time of Gregory the IXth; inserted at large in Aventinus, *Ann. Boior.* l. vii. p. 684. The following extracts from it will be thought curious.

Hildebrandus ante annos centum atque septuaginta primus specie religionis *Antichristi* imperii fundamenta jecit. p. 684.

Flamines illi *Babylonia* [meaning the bishops of Rome] soli regnare cupiunt, ferre parem non possunt, non desistent donec omnia pedibus suis conculcaverint,

our

our famous historian, Matthew Paris; who hath taken care to inform us, that his contemporary, Robert Grosstete, Bishop of Lincoln, the most considerable of all the English bishops, and equally renowned for his affection to civil and religious liberty, was so much in earnest in fixing this charge on the see of Rome, that, as it had been the common theme of his meditations during life, so it occupied his dying moments; the *Pope*, and *Antichrist*, being, as he tells us, among the last words of this zealous prelate [x].

atque in templo Dei sedeant, extollanturque supra omne id, quod colitur. Ib.

Nova consilia sub pectore volutat, ut proprium sibi constituat imperium, *leges commutat*, suas sancit; contaminat, diripit, spoliat, fraudat, occidit, perditus homo ille (*quem Antichristum vocare solent*) in cujus fronte *contumeliæ nomine* scriptum est, “Deus sum, errare non possum,” *in templo Dei sedet*; longè latèque dominatur. *Ib.*

— *Reges decem pariter existunt — Decem Cornua — Cornuque parvulum —* Quid hæc prophetiâ apertius? p. 685.

[x] MATTH. PARIS, ad ann. 1253. p. 874. ed. Watts, 1640.

34 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

7. The XIVth century affords many authorities in point; among which the immortal names of Dante [y] and Petrarch [z]

[y] *Purgat.* 32.

[z] *Epistolarum* sine titulo, Liber. Ep. xvi. p. 130. Basil. 1581.—Many strokes in this epistle are, to the last degree, severe and caustic. Addressing himself to Rome, “*Illa equidem ipsa es, says he, quam in spiritu facer vidit Evangelista. — Populi et gentes et linguæ, aquæ sunt super quas meretrix sedes; recognosce habitum. Mulier circumdata purpurâ, et coccino, et inaurata auro, et lapide pretioso, et margaritis, habens poculum aureum in manu suâ, plenum abominatione et immunditiâ fornicationis ejus. — Audi reliqua. Et vidi (inquit) mulierem ebriam de sanguine sanctorum, et de sanguine martyrum Jesu. Quid files? — And so goes on to apply the prophecies of the Revelations to the church of Rome, in terms that furnish out a good comment on the famous verse in one of his poems —*

Gia Roma, hor Babylonia false è ria—

Numberless passages in the writings of Petrarch speak of Rome, under the name of *Babylon*. But an equal stress is not to be laid on all of these. It should be remembered, that the Popes, in Petrarch's time, resided at Avignon; greatly to the disparagement of themselves, as he thought, and especially of Rome; of which this singular man was little less than idolatrous. The situation of the place, surrounded by waters, and his spleenetic concern for the *exiled* Church (for under this idea, he painted to himself the Pope's

are

are commonly cited. But the example of our Wicklif, who adorned that age, is most to our purpose, and may excuse the mention of any other. This extraordinary man saw far into all the abuses of his time : but he had nothing more at heart, than to expose the *Antichristianism* of the Roman Pontif[*a*].

8. Still, as the times grew more enlightened, the controversy concerning Antichrist became more general and important. The writings of Wicklif had great migration to the banks of Avignon) brought to his mind the condition of the Jewish church in the Babylonian captivity. And this parallel was all, perhaps, that he meant to insinuate in most of those passages. But, when he applies the prophecies to Rome, as to the *Apocalyptic* Babylon (as he clearly does in the epistle under consideration), his meaning is not equivocal ; and we do him but justice to give him an honourable place among the TESTES VERITATIS.

[*a*] See the catalogue of his works in Cave's Hist. Lit. vol. ii. App. p. 63 ; in which is the following book of Dialogues. Dialogorum libri quatuor ; quorum—quartus Romanæ Ecclesiæ sacramenta, ejus pestiferam vocationem, ANTICHRISTI REGNUM, fratrum fraudulentam originem atque eorum hypocrisim, variaque nostro ævo scitu dignissima, perstringit.

36 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

effects both at home and abroad ; and, with other causes, contributed very much to the cultivation of free enquiry, and to the improvement of all useful knowledge, in the XVth century. The church of Rome was pushed vigorously on all sides ; and, in her turn, omitted no means of self-defence. That the *worst* were not scrupled, may be seen by what passed in England, at that time, as well as by the sanguinary and faithless proceedings at the council of Constance. Lord Cobham, and the two Bohemian martyrs, were committed to the flames, for nothing so much, as for asserting the impious doctrine, ‘ That the Pope was Antichrist.’

9. We now enter on the XVIth century ; distinguished in the annals of mankind by that great event, The Reformation of long oppressed and much adulterated religion. The Christian world had slumbered in its chains, for full ten ages. But Liberty came at last—

Libertas, quæ sera tamen respexit INERTEM.

This

Prophecies concerning ANTICHRIST. 37

This important work was begun, and prosecuted, on the common principle, That the bishop of Rome was Antichrist: and the great separation from the church of Rome was every where justified on the idea, That Rome was the Babylon of the Revelations; and that Christians were bound by an express command in those prophecies, to *come out of her communion*.

Leo X. was thunder-struck with this cry, which resounded on all sides; and, in the last Lateran council, gave it in charge to all preachers, that none of them should presume to call the Pope, Antichrist, or to treat this obnoxious subject in their discourses to the people [b]. But his edict came too late. The notion had taken deep root in the minds of men; and the name of Antichrist, as applied to the Pope, was current in all quarters.

[b] Mandantes omnibus, &c. — *tempus quoque præfixum futurorum malorum, vel ANTICHRISTI ADVENTUM — prædicare, vel asserere, nequaquam præsumant.* BIN. CONC. Lateran. v. sub Leone X. Sess. xi. p. 632.

38 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

10. From this time to the present, *the charge of Antichristianism* against the church of Rome is to be regarded, not as the language of private men, or particular synods; but as the common voice of the whole Protestant world: so that it will be needless to bring down the history of it any lower.

THIS DEDUCTION, though made with all possible brevity, hath held us so long, that I have but time for one or two short reflexions upon it.

1. *First*, It may seem probable from the general prevalence of this opinion, in all the periods of the Christian church, that it must needs have some solid ground in the scriptural prophecies: it not being otherwise conceivable, that it should spread so far, and continue so long; or that the more enlightened, as well as barbarous ages, should concur in the profession of it.

2. *Secondly*, from the catalogue of illustrious names, here produced, and from
the

the singular stress, which all Protestant churches to this day have ever laid on this principle, we may see the importance of the general question. The papal divines have an evident reason for treating it with contempt. The men of thought and inquiry, who speculate within the Roman communion, may be restrained by considerations of fear or decency, from joining [c] in this invidious charge against the

[c] M. d'Alembert, indeed, goes further. He acquaints us, that this *charge* is now out of date, and that nobody, either within or without the Romish communion, makes it any longer. For, speaking of a public inscription at Geneva, in which *the Pope is called Antichrist*, he animadverts on this disgrace of that Protestant people, and very kindly suggests to them what their improved sentiments and language should be on that subject. *As for the Catholics*, (says he, very gravely) *the Pope is regarded by them, as the Head of the true Church: By sage and moderate Protestants, he is seen in the light of a sovereign prince, whom they respect, though they do not obey him: But, in an age like this, HE IS NO LONGER ANTICHRIST IN THE OPINION OF ANY BODY.* "Pour les Catholiques, le Pape est le chef de la véritable Eglise; pour les Protestants sages et modérées, c'est un Souverain qu'ils respectent comme Prince sans lui obéir: mais dans un siècle tel que nôtre, il n'est plus l'Antichrist

40 *Prophecies concerning* ANTICHRIST.

head of their church. But for any, that profess Christianity, and call themselves Protestants, to make light of inquiries into the prophecies concerning Antichrist, and to manifest a scorn of all attempts to apply them in the way, in which they have so generally, and with such effect been applied, is a sort of conduct, which will not so readily find an excuse, much less a justification.

3. *Lastly*, whatever becomes of the *truth*, or *importance* of the doctrine, the *antiquity* of it is not to be disputed. For we are authorized to affirm, on the most certain grounds of history, that a Roman power, commonly called Antichrist, was expected to arise in *the latter times*, by the primitive Christians; and that the Imperial was not deemed to be that power, so long as it subsisted. It is, further, unquestionable that not the Emperor, but the Bishop or Church

pour personne." Encyclopedie, Art. GENEVE.—If the present age be, here, truly characterized, it was high time, or rather it was too late, to found this Protestant Lecture.

of

of Rome was afterwards thought entitled to the name of Antiehrift by many persons of that communion, for several successive centuries, previous to the æra of the Reformation.

These facts should abate the wonder, at least, which some express at hearing the names of the *Pope* and *Antichrist* pronounced together. They must surely convince every man, that this language, whatever foundation it may, or may not, have in the prophecies, is not taken up without precedents and authorities : and that the notion, conveyed by it, is not a conceit of yesterday, which sprung out of recent prejudices, and novel interpretations. This, I say, is a conclusion which every man must draw from the premises, laid down in this discourse : and this, for the present, is the main use I would request you, to make of those premises.

S E R M O N VIII.

Prejudices against the Doctrine of
ANTICHRIST.

I Ep. JOHN ii. 18.

*—Ye have heard that Antichrist shall
come—*

ONE of the principal prejudices against the doctrine of Antichrist, as understood and applied by Protestant divines, arises out of a circumstance, which was just touched in the close of my last discourse, and is of importance enough to be now resumed and more particularly considered.

I. It is well known, that, when the Reformation was set on foot in the sixteenth century, this great work was every where justified and conducted on the general principle,

ple, "That the Pope, or at least the church of Rome, was Antichrist."

"Now men of sense, who have looked no farther into the subject, and yet remember, as they easily may, the bitterness, the policy, the fraud, too commonly observable in the conduct of religious (as of other) parties, easily fall into the suspicion, That this cry of Antichrist was only an artifice of the time, or at least an extravagance of it; when the minds of men were intensely heated against each other, and when of course no arms would be refused, that might serve to annoy or distress the enemy.

In these circumstances, it was natural enough, it will be said, for angry men to *see* that in the prophecies which was not contained in them; or for designing men to *feign* that which they did not see; in order the more effectually to carry on the cause in which they had embarked, and to seduce the unwary multitude into their quarrel. In short, the passions of the Reformed,

formed, it is readily presumed, had, some way or other, conjured up this spectre of Antichrist, as a convenient engine, by which they might either gratify their own spleen, or excite that of the people; the prophecies all the while being no further concerned in the question, than as they were wrested for these purposes (as they frequently have been, in like cases) from their true and proper meaning."

To remove this capital prejudice (which, more than any other, hath, perhaps, diverted serious men from giving a due attention to this argument) was the main purpose of the preceding discourse; in which it was clearly shewn from historical testimony, that the question concerning Antichrist had its rise in the earliest times; that the prophecies concerning Antichrist, though imperfectly enough understood, and, it may be, passionately applied, had yet been considered, very generally, as referring to *some* corrupt Christian and even ecclesiastical person or power; and that many eminent

ment members of the Christian church had even applied those prophecies to the *same* person or power, to which Protestants now apply them, and for the *same* end which Protestants have in view, when they apply them to such person or power, for many successive centuries, before the Reformation began. From all which it is undeniable, that the Reformers did not innovate in the interpretation of the prophecies concerning Antichrist; and that their application of them to the see of Rome, was not a contrivance, which sprung out of the passionate resentments, or interested policies of that time.

It is true indeed (for the truth should not, and needs not, be concealed) that the Reformers were forward enough to lay hold on this received sense of the prophecies, and to make their utmost advantage of it; the account of which matter is, briefly, this: The Christian church had now for many ages been held together in a close dependence on the chair of St. Peter;

Peter ; and to secure and perpetuate that dependence, was the principal object and concern of the papal court. Various means were employed for this purpose : but the most effectual was thought to be, to inculcate in the strongest terms on the minds of Christians the absolute necessity of communicating with the Bishop of Rome, as the centre of unity, and, by divine appointment, the supreme visible head of the Christian world. Hence, to renounce in any degree the authority and jurisdiction of Rome, was deemed the most inexpiable of all sins. The name of SCHISM was fastened upon it ; a name, which was founded higher than that of Heresy itself, as implying in it the accumulated guilt of Apostacy, and Infidelity. The way of heaven was shut against all offenders of this sort ; and, to make their condition as miserable, as it was hopeless, all the engines of persecution, such as racks, fires, gibbets, inquisitions, and even Crusades, had been employed against them : as was
seen

seen in the case of the Albigenses and others, who; at different times, had attempted to withdraw themselves from the papal dominion.

Such was the state of things, when the bold spirit of Luther resolved, at all adventures, to break through this inveterate servitude [a], so dextrously imposed on the Christian world, under the pretence, and in the name, of ecclesiastical union. Yet the peril of the attempt was easily foreseen, or was presently felt. And, therefore, the Reformers (to prevent the ill effects which the dreadful name of *Schism* might have on themselves and their cause, and to satisfy at once their own consciences and those of their adherents) not only revived and enforced the old charge of *Antichristianism* against the church of Rome; but further insisted (on the authority of those prophecies which justified

[a] Rompons leurs liens, dit-il, et rejettons leur joug de dessus nos têtes. *Bossuet, H. V. l. i. c. 26.*

the charge) that Christians were bound in conscience, by the most express command, to break all communion with her. The expedient, one sees, was well calculated to serve the purpose in hand : but still the command was truly and pertinently alledged ; for it exists in so many words (however the blindness or the bigotry of former times had overlooked it) in the book of the *Revelations* [b]. So that whoever admitted the *charge* itself to be well founded, could not reject this *consequence* of it, That Christ and Antichrist had no fellowship with each other. And on this popular ground, chiefly, the Protestant cause, in those early times, was upheld ; with no small advantage to the patrons of it ; it being now clear, that the invidious imputation of Schism had lost its malignity in the general obligation, which lay upon Christians, to renounce all communion with the church of Rome.

[b] *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Rev. xviii. 4.*

This being the true account of that zeal, with which the doctrine of Antichrist was asserted in the days of Reformation, let us see how the case stands at present; and whether any reasonable prejudice lies against the doctrine itself, from the uses, that were then so happily made of it.

In the first place, The injunction, *to come out of her*, was, as I observed, not forged by the Reformers; nor (admitting that church to be Antichristian) was it misrepresented by them. Every reader of the prophecies must confess, that the command is clearly delivered, and that the sense of it is not mistaken. How serviceable foever, therefore, this topic was to the cause of reformation, it is not, on that account, to be the less esteemed by the just and candid inquirer.

In the next place, I will freely admit, that the dread, in which most men, if not all men [c], of that time, were held, of in-

[c] Il [Luther] condamnoit les Bohemiens qui s'etoient separez de nôtre communion, et protestoit qu'il ne lui arriveroit jamais de tomber dans *un semblable Schisme*.

curing the imputation of Schism, was much greater, than the occasion required, and, upon the whole, a sort of panic terror. For, though a causeless separation from the church would indeed have loaded the Reformers with much and real guilt; yet when the abuses of it had risen to that height as to reduce an honest man to the alternative, either of committing sin, or of leaving its communion, they might well have justified themselves on the evident necessity of the thing, and had no need of a positive command to authorize their separation. All this is, now, clearly seen; and if the first Reformers did not see thus

Bossuet, Hist. des Variat. l. i. p. 21. Par. 1740. And again, p. 28; Apres, dit-il [Luther], que je'us surmonté tous les argumens qu'on proposoit, il en restoit un dernier qu'a peine je pus surmonter par le secours de Jesus Christ avec une extrême difficulté et beaucoup d'angoisse; c'est qu'il falloit écouter l'Eglise.— One sees for what purpose M. Bossuet quotes these passages, and others of the same kind, from the writings of Luther. However, they shew very clearly how deep an impression the idea of Schism had made on the mind even of this intrepid Reformer.

much

much (as very probably they did not) all that follows is, That the doctrine of Antichrist, from which that command derived its effect, was less necessary to their cause, than they supposed it to be; not, that the doctrine itself is without authority, or the command without obligation.

Lastly, I observe, that, though the *violences* of the time might force the Reformers to take shelter in this doctrine of Antichrist, and though the *prejudices* of the time might induce them to take the advantage, they did, of it; yet, neither of these considerations affords any just presumption against the doctrine, as it lies in scripture, and is enforced by us at this time out of it; because we argue, not from their authority, but from the prophecies themselves; which are much better understood by us; than they were by them; and are still maintained to speak the sense, which they put upon them, I mean with respect to the general application of them to the church of Rome, though we have no-

thing to apprehend either from the power of that church, or from the prejudices of the people.

Let no man, therefore, rashly conclude, from the free use made of this doctrine by our old Reformers (and there is scarce one of them that has not left behind him a tract or discourse on Antichrist) that it hath no better or other foundation, than in their interests or passions. A reasonable man sees, that it has no dependance at all upon them. That Luther, indeed, heated in the controversy with the church of Rome, and smoking, as I may say, from the recent blast of the papal thunders, should cry out, ANTICHRIST [*d*], shall pass, if you will, for a fally of rage and desperation [*e*]. But that we, at this day, who revolve the prophecies at our ease, and are in little more dread of modern Rome, than of

[*d*] *Contra Bullam Antichristi*—a tract of Luther, so called, against the Bull of Leo X.

[*e*] Luther reconnoît après la rupture ouverte, que dans les commencements il étoit comme au desespoir—*Bossuet*, H. V. p. 26.

antient

antient Babylon, should still find the resemblance so striking as to fall upon the same idea; and should even be driven against the strong bias of prejudice (which with us, in England, for above a century past, has drawn the other way) to adopt the language of our great Reformer; this, I say, is a consideration of another sort, and will not be put off so slightly.

STILL, there are other prejudices, which oppose themselves to this great Protestant principle, *That the Pope is Antichrist*: and these, it will not be beside the purpose of this Lecture to consider. It may, then, be said,

IR "That, although there be not the same evident necessity for bringing this odious charge against the Papacy, as there was formerly in the infancy of Reformation; yet obvious reasons are not wanting, which may possibly induce the Protestant churches of our times to repeat and inforce it. So long as the separation is kept up, the parti-

zans of the cause will not scruple to lay hold on every popular topic, by which it may be promoted. But an *ill name* is the readiest of all expedients, and generally the most effectual for this service. And as *Heretic* is the term in use, when the church of Rome would discredit the Reformation; so, *Antichrist* serves just as well, in the mouth of a Protestant, to disgrace the Catholic party. Hence, the people are gratified in a low spite against the person of the Pope; the better sort are confirmed in their religious or politic aversion to the church of Rome; and Princes themselves are invited to come in aid of the prophecies, by turning their arms and councils against a godless antichristian tyranny: and all this, to the ruin of public peace, and in defiance of Christian charity."

When men declaim, instead of arguing, or, what is worse, when they argue from their suspicions only, it may not be easy to give them an answer to their
fatif-

satisfaction. Otherwise, one might reply,

First, That the question is not, what use has been, or may be, made of this doctrine concerning Antichrist; but whether there be reason to believe that such doctrine is really contained in sacred scripture. If there be, it will become us to treat it with respect, how much soever it may have been misapplied, or perverted.

In the *next place*, one might observe, that no man, who understood the state of this controversy, ever applied the prophecies concerning Antichrist to the *person* of the Pope, but in general to the church of Rome, or rather to the Antichristian spirit, by which it is governed; or, if to the *Pope*, to him only as representing that society, of which he is the head; and so far only, as he acted in the spirit of it. And there is nothing strange or unusual in this use of the term. When Hobbes wrote his famous book, called LEVIATHAN (a word, now

at least, of almost as ill sound, as Antichrist itself) no man supposes, that he meant to apply this character, exclusively, to the person of any prince, then living; but, in general, to *civil government*, according to the ideas he had formed of it. And this way of speaking, as I have before observed, is especially familiar to the sacred writers. Many of the Popes are said to have been, and, for any thing I know, *may* have been, *Saints*, in their private morals: so that when we apply the term, Antichrist, to them, we do not mean to stigmatize their *persons*, but merely to express the sense which the prophecies lead us to entertain of the communion, over which they preside; though they may not exemplify in their own conduct, or not in any remarkable degree, the avowed principles of that communion.

Conceive, therefore, with more respect of Protestant divines, when they explain and vindicate the prophecies concerning Antichrist, than to suppose, that they in-
dulse

dulge in themselves, or would encourage in others, *a low spite against the person of the Roman Pontif.*

Thirdly, It is to be observed, that, although this prophetic language may tend to confirm Protestants *in a religious, or, if you will, politic aversion to the church of Rome*; yet it is not therefore to be forbore, if the scriptures do, indeed, authorize the use of it; nor is there any hurt done, if the principles of that church be not misrepresented; for then, such aversion becomes the wisdom and the duty of all Christians. Besides, this aversion proceeds no farther in well-informed Protestants, than to keep them at distance from the Romish communion, and to admonish others of their obligation to forsake it. And, if the members, above all, if the rulers, of that communion would restrain *their* zeal within the same bounds (though they would not, we say, be equally justified in this zeal) neither public peace, nor Christian charity, would suffer by it.

Lastly,

Lastly, it should be remembered, That, when the prophecies foretel the downfall of Antichrist, and even go so far as to point out to us the princes of that communion, as the destined instruments of such catastrophe; yet neither is hereby any duty imposed on those princes to make war upon the Pope, nor any encouragement given to Protestants themselves to concur in any such measures. For the prophets simply predict an *event*; and do not deliver in their prediction, or propose to deliver, *rules* for our conduct. Our Saviour himself, speaking by the spirit, and in the language of prophecy, said—*I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword*. But will any man suppose that this prediction justifies, or was meant in any degree to justify, that state of things, which it describes, and which the author of it foresaw would too certainly come to pass? Nor think, that the event predicted, I mean, *the fall of Antichrist*, will not take place, unless our invectives, or hostile attempts, make way for
for

for it? If the prediction be divine, there is ONE, who will see that it be accomplished. Princes and States may have nothing less in view than to fulfil the prophecies of sacred Scripture: yet, when the appointed time is come, they will certainly fulfil them, though they never thought *of coming in aid of the prophecies*—though we should not encourage them in any such presumptuous design—nay, though we should do our utmost, as it is our duty to do, to restrain vindictive and ill-advised men from turning their arms even against Antichrist himself, for the sake of religion.

This topic, I know, is much laboured by the advocates of the papal cause, in order to throw disgrace on Protestant writers, whom they consider as so many incendiaries, wickedly attempting to spread the flames of war through Christian societies. There might be a time when, in the case of some few men, transported by passion, because outrageously oppressed, there was, perhaps, some colour for this charge.

charge. But to persist in it, as they still do, only shews that they neither conceive with due reverence of divine prophecy, nor do justice to that spirit of toleration by which the Protestant churches, at least of our days, are so eminently distinguished,

III. “A *third* prejudice, which operates in the minds of many persons against the principle under consideration, arises from the disagreeing opinions of learned men concerning the sense and application of the prophecies; while not only the papal Divines, but many writers of note even among ourselves, have strenuously maintained that the church of Rome is no way concerned in the predictions concerning Antichrist.”

To obviate this prejudice, I observe,

1. That arguments from authority, in all cases where reason and good sense must finally decide, are very little to be regarded. Shew me the question in religion, or even
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in common morals, about which learned men have not disagreed; nay, shew me a single text of scripture, though ever so plain and precise, which the perverseness or ingenuity of interpreters has not drawn into different, and often contrary meanings. What then shall we conclude? That there is no truth in religion, no certainty in morals, no authority in sacred scripture? If such conclusions, as these, be carried to their utmost length, in what else can they terminate, but absolute universal scepticism?

2. I observe that this authority, after all, whatever weight we may, in the general, suppose it to have, is, in the present case, no great matter; for it is, in effect, but the authority of ONE man, whose eminent worth, however, and lustre of reputation, made it current with some others.

The character of HUGO GROTIUS is well known. He is justly esteemed among the ablest and most learned men of an age,
that

that abounded in ability and learning. Besides his other shining talents, his acquaintance with history was extensive; and his knowledge of scripture, profound. And yet, with two such requisites for unlocking the true sense of the prophetic writings, this excellent man undertook to prove in form, *That the Pope was not Antichrist.*

The account of this mischance is as extraordinary, as the mischance itself. The moral qualities of Grotius were still more admirable, than his intellectual: and in these qualities, we shall find the true spring of his unhappy and misapplied pains on the subject before us.

He was in his own nature just, candid, benevolent, to a supreme degree; and the experience of an active turbulent life had but fortified him the more in a love of these pacific virtues. He was, on principle, a sincere and zealous Christian; and consequently impressed with a due sense of that exalted charity, which is the characteristic of that religion: but he had seen and felt
much

much of the mischiefs, which proceed from theological quarrels : and thus every thing concurred to make him a friend to peace, and, above all, to peace among Christians.

An union of the Catholic and Protestant churches seemed necessary to this end : and the apparent candour, whether real or affected, of some learned persons, whom he had long known and valued in the church of Rome, drew him into the belief, that such a project was not impracticable. Henceforth, it became the ruling object of his life ; and, permitting himself too easily to conclude, that the Protestant doctrine of Antichrist was the sole, or principal obstruction to the union desired, he bent all the efforts of his wit and learning to discredit and overthrow that doctrine.

Thus was this virtuous man betrayed by the wisdom and equity of his own character ; and I know not if the observation of the moral poet can be so justly applied to any other——

Infant

Infani sapiens nomen ferat, æquus iniqui,
 Ultrà quàm satis est, virtutem si petat ipsam [f].

The issue of his general scheme was what might easily be foreseen : and of his *arguments*, I shall only say thus much, That the Romish writers themselves, for whose use they might seem to be invented, though they continue to object his name to us, are too wise to venture the streſs of their cause upon them.

To conclude this head of authority, let me just observe,

3. In the last place, that, if any regard be due to it, the advantage will clearly be on our side. For, though the name of Grotius made an impression on some Protestant interpreters of scripture, not inconsiderable for their parts and learning, yet, when the grounds of his opinion came to be examined, the most and the ablest of them have generally declared against him : and among these, let it be no offence to

[f] Hor. 1 Ep. vi. 15.

the

the manes of this great [g] man, if we particularly mention two, and prefer even to his authority that of Newton and Clarke; the one, the ablest philosopher, and the other, the coolest and most rational divine, that any age has produced.

IV. “ Another, and *fourth* prejudice may have been entertained on this subject from observing that many curious persons, who have employed themselves much and long in the study of the prophecies, especially of those concerning Antichrist, have been led (on their authority, as they pretend) to fix the time and other circumstances of great events, which yet have not fallen out agreeable to their expectations. Whence it is inferred, that no solid information can

[g] Grotius was more than a great, he was a fashionable man. No wonder therefore, that, under the influence of two such prejudices, his opinions should find followers; which yet they would scarce have found with us, if the political state of that time had not been a *third* prejudice in their favour. See the Bishop of Gloucester’s Sermon, *On the rise of Antichrist*.

be derived from the prophecies, and that all our reasonings upon them are no better than fancy and conjecture."

Now, though the indiscretion of these curious persons, who would needs prophecy when their business was only to interpret [*b*], be injurious enough to their own character, I do not see how it affects that of the prophets; unless whatever may be abused (as every thing may) be answerable for the abuses made of it. But to reply more directly to this charge.

The ill success of men in explaining prophecies of events, not yet come to pass, can in no degree discredit those prophecies, unless it be essential to this sort of revelation to be so clearly proposed, as that it may and must be perfectly understood, before those events happen; the contrary of which I have already shewn, in a preceding

[*b*] "The folly of interpreters has been, to foretel times and things by this prophecy, as if God designed to make them prophets." *Sir I. Newton*, p. 251.

discourse.

discourse. The very idea of prophecy is that of a *light shining in a dark place*: and a place is not *dark*, if we have light enough to discern distinctly and fully every remote corner of it. But the thing speaks itself. For to what end is the prediction delivered in obscure and enigmatic terms, if the purpose of the inspirer was that the subject of the prediction should be immediately, and in all its circumstances, precisely apprehended? Why, then, is any distinction made between Prophecy, and History? The mode of writing clearly demonstrates, that something, for a time at least, was meant to be concealed from us: and then, if men will attempt, out of season, to penetrate this mystery, what wonder if mistake be the fruit of their presumption?

Again: the *declared* end of prophecy is, not that we may be enabled by it to foresee things before they come to pass; but *when* they come to pass, that we may acknowledge the divine author of the prophecy [i]. What dishonour, then, can it

[i] "God gave this, and the prophecies of the Old

be to the prophet, that he is not perfectly understood, till we be expected to make use of his information? Nay, in the case before us, it would dishonour him, if he was. For, of the prophecies concerning Antichrist we are expressly told, that they are *shut up and sealed, till the time of the end*; that is, till Time brings the key along with him. So that, if men could open them, by their own wit and sagacity only, they would give the lye to the prophet. And thus we see, that the very mistakes of interpreters attempting prematurely to unfold the *sealed* prophecies concerning Antichrist, far from subverting, support the credit of those prophecies [k].

“ Testament, not to gratify men’s curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things; but that, after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event; and his own providence, not the interpreter’s, be then manifested thereby to the world.”
Sir I. Newton, p. 251.

[k] “ It is a part of this prophecy, that it should not be understood before the last age of the world; and

But

But I have something more to say on this subject. Though we cannot see every thing in the prophecies, which we are impatient to see, it is not to be supposed that we can see nothing in them. If this were the case, we should scarce regard them as prophecies at all; at least we should hardly be prevailed upon to read and consider them. For, it is on the supposition that some *light* is communicated to us, that we are disposed, as well as required, to *take heed to it*. In short, if we saw nothing, we should expect nothing: such prophecies would not engage our curiosity, or so much as take our attention. In one word, they would be utterly lost upon us.

This seems to have been, in some measure, the case with regard to this very book of the *Revelations*. The early Christians saw so little in this prophecy, that they were led by degrees to neglect the study of it. Otherwise, the little
“therefore it makes for the credit of the prophecy,
“that it is not yet understood.” *Sir I. Newton*, p. 251.

they did see, might have given them a glimpse at least, of many things, that intimately concerned both their faith and conduct.

It being then necessary, as I said, that prophecy should, from the first, convey some light to us, and time having now very much increased that light, it follows, that men may excuseably employ themselves in studying and contemplating even unfulfilled prophecies. They may conjecture modestly of points which time has not yet revealed: but they should in no case pronounce confidently, or decide dogmatically, upon them.

It seems therefore to be going too far, to pass an indiscriminate censure on all those, who have proposed their thoughts on the sense of prophecies not yet completed, though it be ever so clear that a wrong construction has been made of them. Nay, it is worth considering whether they may not even have conjectured right, when they have been thought to
mistake

mistake the most widely. I say this, chiefly, with regard to the *time*, which some writers have beforehand assigned for the accomplishment of certain prophecies, and that, on principles apparently contained in those prophecies; but so unhappily, as to draw much scorn and ridicule upon themselves.

I explain myself by a famous instance. Nothing has been more censured in Protestant divines, than their temerity in fixing *the fall of Antichrist*; though there are certain data in the prophecies, from which very probable conclusions on that subject may be drawn. Experience, it is said, contradicts their calculation. But it is not considered, that the fall of Antichrist, is not *a single event*, to happen all at once; but *a state of things*, to continue through a long tract of time, and to be gradually accomplished. Hence, the interpretation of the prophecy might be rightly formed, though the expectations of most men are disappointed.

It is visible, I suppose, that the papal power (if we agree to call that, *Anticbrist*) is now on the decline; whensoever that declension began, or how long soever it may be, before it will be finished. And therefore interpreters may have aimed right, though they seemed to others, and perhaps to themselves, to be mistaken.

Suppose, the ruin of the Western Empire had been the subject of a prediction, and some had collected, beforehand, from the terms of the prophecy, that it would happen at a *particular* time; when yet nothing more, in fact, came to pass, than *the first irruption of the barbarous nations*. Would it be certain that this collection was groundless and ill made, because the empire subsisted in a good degree of vigour for some centuries after? Might it not be said, that the empire *was falling* [1] from that æra,

[1] St. Jerom, who lived in this time, speaks in the very terms, here supposed, *Romanus orbis* RVLT. *Ep.* iii.

or perhaps before ; though, in the event, it fell not, till its sovereignty was shaken by the rude hands of Attila, or rather, till it was laid flat by the well-directed force of Theodoric ?

But we have an instance in point, recorded in sacred scripture. It had been gathered from the old prophecies [*m*], that, *in the last times* (that is, when the Messiah was come), *a new earth and new heavens should be created*. The style is symbolical ; but the meaning is, and was so understood to be, that a new Law should be given to mankind, and prevail over the whole world. This Law was accordingly promulged and began to prevail in the days of the Apostles. Yet there were some who said, *Where is the promise of his coming ? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation of the world*. It was taken for granted, we see, that this great and glorious work, equivalent to the production of a new world, would take place

[*m*] Isai. lxv. 17.—2 Pet. iii. 4. 13.

suddenly

suddenly and at once ; which not being the case, it seemed to follow, that the prophecies were false, or at least ill understood : when, yet, surely, they were then fulfilling under the eyes of these *scoffers*.

It will be considered, how far these hints may go towards rescuing some respectable interpreters (for I speak only of such) from that contempt, which has fallen upon them, and, from them, on the prophecies themselves, for some hazardous conclusions, or (if you will) predictions, formed and given out by them, concerning the reign and fall of Antichrist. My meaning, however, is not to make myself responsible for these conclusions. They may not be rightly drawn from the premises laid down ; or the premises may be such, that the precise date of those transactions cannot be determined from them ; at least, not till the scene of prophecy be closed, or, in the prophetic language, *till the mystery of God be finished* [n]. In the

[n] Rev. x. 7.

mean time, it is not clear and undeniable that there is no ground at all for such conjectures : or, if it were, it would only follow that they, who made them, had been rash and indiscreet in commenting too minutely and confidently on prophecies unfulfilled ; and it would be weak, as we have seen, to contract a prejudice against the subject itself from the mistakes of such commentators.

V. After all, the main and master prejudice, I doubt, is, that levity of mind which disposes too many to take their notions on this, and other subjects of moment, from certain polite and popular, it may be, but frivolous and libertine writers : men, who have no religion, or not enough to venerate the prophetic scriptures ; who have no knowledge, or certainly not enough to understand them.

But with such cavillers, as these, I have no concern ; this Lecture, and the subject of it, being addressed to men of another character,

character, to fair, candid, sober, and enlightened inquirers, only : For so the inspired person, who first announced these wonders concerning Antichrist, to mankind, expressly declares, or rather prophesies—*None of the wicked shall understand ; but THE WISE shall understand [o].*

[o] Daniel xii. 10.

S E R M O N IX.

The Prophetic Style considered.

EZEKIEL XX. 49.

—*They say of me, Doth he not speak
Parables?*

I N recounting the various prejudices, which have diverted many persons from giving a due attention to the prophecies concerning Antichrist, I may be thought to have overlooked ONE of the most considerable: which ariseth from *the peculiar style, in which they are delivered*. But this being a subject of larger compass, and nicer inquiry, than the rest, (in which, too, the credit of all the prophetic scriptures, as well as those respecting Antichrist, is concerned)

cerned) I have purposely reserved it for a distinct and separate examination.

WITHOUT DOUBT, a plain man, brought up in our customs and notions, and unacquainted with theological studies, when he first turns himself to the contemplation of the Jewish and Christian prophecies, will be surprized, perhaps disgusted, to find, that he understands little, or nothing of them. His *modesty* may incline him to think, that such writings are too mysterious for his comprehension : or, his *laziness and presumption* may dispose him to reject them, at once, as perfectly unintelligible ; to consider the language of them, as a jargon, to which no ideas are annexed ; or, at least, as a kind of cypher, of so wild and fanatical a texture, that no clear and certain construction can be made of it.

Now, this prejudice, whichever way it points, will be obviated, if it can be shewn,

1. That the prophetic style was of common and approved use, in the times, when
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the prophecies were delivered, and among the people, to whom they were addressed.

And

2. That this style, how dark or fanciful soever it may appear, is yet *reducible to rule*; that is, is constructed on such principles, as make it the subject of just criticism and reasonable interpretation; and, in particular, to us, at this day.

For a language is not *fanatical*, that is authorized by general practice; nor can it be deemed *unintelligible*, when it is capable of having its meaning ascertained.

I. The proof of these two points will most conveniently be given together, in a deduction of the causes, which produced the character of the prophetic style.

That character, I believe, is truly given by those who affirm, That the style of the prophets was only the poetical, and highly figurative, style of the Eastern nations. But if you go farther, and ask, How it came to pass, that the oriental poetry was

so much more figurative than ours, it may not be enough to say, as many others have done, that this difference of character was owing to the influence of the sun, and to the superior heat and fervour, which it gave to an eastern imagination. For I know not whether there be reason to think, that the sun hath any such effect on the powers of the mind; or that the fancies of men are apter to catch, and blaze out in metaphor, within a warm climate, than a cold one: a figurative cast of style being observable in the native poetry of all countries; and that, so far as appears from history and experience, in a pretty equal degree.

Besides, if the fact were allowed, the answer would scarce be sufficient. For, as we shall presently see, the symbolic language of Prophecy is too consistent and uniform, hath too much of art and method in it, to be derived from the casual flights and fallies of the imagination *only*, how power-

powerfully soever you suppose it to have operated in the prophets.

We then must go much deeper for a true account of the emblematic and highly coloured expression, which glares so strongly in the prophetic scriptures : and we shall find it, partly, in the nature of the human mind ; and, partly, in the genius, indeed, of the oriental nations, and especially of the Jews, but as fashioned, not by the influence of their climate, but by the modes of their learning and institution.

I must be as brief as possible on a subject, which many learned writers [a] have largely and fully discussed ; and, as the reflexions, I have to offer to you upon it, are chiefly taken from them, I may the rather bespeak your attention to what follows.

1. First, then, let it be observed, that the original language of all nations is extremely imperfect. Their stock of words being small, they explain themselves very

[a] Mede, More, Daubuz, Vitringa, and, above all, the learned Founder of this Lecture.

much by *signs*, or representative actions: and their conceptions, in that early state of society, being gross and rude, the few words they have are replete with material images, and so are what we call highly metaphorical; and this, not from choice or design, or even from any extraordinary warmth of fancy, but of necessity, and from the very nature of things.

Such is the primitive character of all languages: and it continues long in all, because the figurative manner is thought ornamental, when it is no longer necessary; and because the necessity of it is only, if at all, removed by long use and habit in abstract speculation: a degree of refinement, to which the orientals, and the Jews especially, never attained; and therefore in their languages, very long

—*Manferunt, hodieque manent vestigia ruris.*

Thus far we may go in accounting for the figured style of the east, from general principles. But this is by no means the whole of the case. For

2. We

2. We are to reflect, that, before an alphabet was invented, and what we call literary writing was formed into an art, men had no way to record their conceptions, or to convey them to others at a distance, but by setting down the figures and shapes of such things as were the objects of their contemplation. Hence, the way of writing in *picture* was as universal, and almost as early, as the way of speaking in *metaphor*; and from the same reason, the necessity of the thing.

In process of time, and through many successive improvements, this rude and simple mode of *picture-writing* was succeeded by that of *symbols*, or was enlarged at least, and enriched by it. By symbols, I mean certain representative marks, rather than express pictures; or, if pictures, such as were at the same time *characters*, and, besides presenting to the eye the resemblance of a particular object, suggested a general idea to the mind. As, when a *horn* was made to denote *strength*; an *eye and scepter*,
G 2 *majesty*;

majesty ; and in numberless such instances ; where the picture was not drawn to express merely the thing itself, but something else, which was, or was conceived to be, analogous to it. This more complex and ingenious form of picture-writing was much practised by the Egyptians, and is that which we know by the name of **HIEROGLYPHICS**.

Indeed, these *symbolic characters* were likely, in a course of successive refinements, to pass into characters by *institution* ; and have, in fact, undergone that change among the Chinese : and it might be expected that *both* would be laid aside by any people that should come to be acquainted with the far more convenient and expeditious method of alphabetic writing. But the event, in some instances, hath been different. The Chinese adhere to their *characters*, though, from their late intercourse with the European nations, one cannot but suppose, that the knowledge of *letters* has been conveyed to them : and the Egyptians, through all
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the extent of their long subsisting and highly polished empire, retained their *hieroglyphics*, notwithstanding their invention and use of an *alphabet*.

Their inducement to this practice might be, the pleasure they took in a mode of writing which gratified their inventive curiosity in looking into the natures and analogies of things; or, it might be a strain of policy in them, to secrete, by this means, their more important discoveries from the vulgar; or, vanity might put them on raising the value of their knowledge by wrapping it up in a vehicle, so amusing at the same time, and mysterious.

What account soever be given of it, the fact is, that the Egyptians cultivated the hieroglyphic species of writing with peculiar diligence; while the antiquity, the splendor, the fame, of that mighty kingdom excited a veneration for it in the rest of the world. Hence it came to pass, that the learning of those times, which was

spread from Egypt as from its center, took a strong tincture of the hieroglyphic spirit. The East was wholly infected by it; so that it became the pride of its wise men to try the reach of each other's capacity by questions conceived and proposed in this form. Even the Greeks, in much later ages, caught the manner of symbolizing their conceptions from Egypt; and either drew their mythology from that quarter, or dressed it out in the old Egyptian garb. But the Israelites, especially, who had their breeding in that country, at the time when the hieroglyphic learning was at its height, carried this treasure with them, among their other *spoils*, into the land of Canaan: and though it be credible that their great Law-giver interdicted the use of hieroglyphic characters; yet the ideas of them were deeply imprinted on their minds, and came out, on every occasion, in those symbols and emblems with which, under the names of *riddles*,
parables,

parables, and *dark sayings*, their writings are so curiously variegated and imbossed.

This then is the true and proper account of that peculiar style which looks so strangely, and, to those who do not advert to this original of it, perhaps so fantastically, in the writings of the prophets. And what more natural, than that a mode of expression, which was so well known, so commonly practised, and so much revered; which was affected by the wittiest, nay, by the wisest men of those times; which was employed in the theology of the eastern world, in its poetry, its philosophy, and all the sublimer forms of composition; what wonder, I say, that this customary, this authorized, this admired, strain of language should be that in which the sacred writers conveyed their highest and most important revelations to mankind?

Nor let any man take offence at the condescension of the divine Inspirer, as though he degraded himself by this compliance

with the humours and fancies of those to whom his inspirations were addressed. For let him reflect, that in what form of words soever it shall please God to communicate himself to man, it must still be in a way that implies the utmost, indeed the same, condescension to our weakneses and infirmities; nay, that immediate inspiration itself, though coming through no medium of language, is of necessity to be accommodated to our methods of perceiving and understanding, how imperfect soever they are.

Besides, if external revelation be possible, it must be given in some one mode of speech or writing, in preference to others. And, if we consider how antient, how general, how widely diffused, this symbolic style has been, and still is, in the world; how necessary it is to rude nations, and how taking with the most refined; how large a proportion of the globe this practice had over-run before and at the time of writing the prophecies, and what vast re-
gions

gions of the South and East, not yet professing the faith, but hereafter, as we presume, to be enlightened by it, the same practice at this day overspreads; when we consider all this, we shall cease perhaps to admire, that the style in question was adopted, rather than any other; or we shall only admire the divine goodness and wisdom of its author, who had contrived beforehand, in the very form of this revelation, what may possibly help to bring on and facilitate the reception of it. Certainly, it may become us, on such an occasion, to enlarge our ideas a little; and not to conclude hastily and peremptorily that, when a general blessing was intended by providence, the mode of conveying it should be instituted singly with an eye to our local notions and confined prejudices, and with no regard to the more prevailing sentiments and expectations of mankind.

In the mean time, it is past a doubt that the hieroglyphic style was predominant

nant in the antient world; in Judæa, particularly, from the times of Moses to the coming of Christ. There was indeed a degree of obscurity in it, so far at least as to furnish the Jews, who had no mind to listen to their Prophets, with a pretence of not understanding them (as we see from the complaint brought against the prophet Ezekiel in the text, *Doth he not speak Parables?*); yet still it cannot be denied, *That this mode of writing was of common and approved use in the ages when the prophecies were delivered, and among the people to whom they were addressed.*

Our FIRST proposition is then reasonably made out; and so much of the SECOND, as affirms that the prophetic style is *constructed on such principles as make it the subject of just criticism and rational interpretation*. For it was constructed, as we have seen, on the symbolic principles of the hiërogyphics; which were not vague uncertain things, but fixed and constant analogies, determinable in their own nature, or from the
steady

steady use that was made of them : and a language, formed on such principles, may be reasonably interpreted upon them. So that what remains is only to shew, that there *are* means, by which this abstruse language may become intelligible to us, at this day.

II. That there are such means, you will easily collect, without requiring me to come to a detail on so immense a subject, from the following considerations.

I. Some light may be expected to arise from the study of the prophecies themselves. For the same symbols, or figures, recur frequently in those writings : and, by comparing one passage with another ; the darker prophecies with the more perspicuous ; the unfulfilled, with such as have been completed ; and those which have their explanation annexed to them, with those that have not ; by this course of inquiry, I say, there is no doubt but some considerable progress may be made

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in fixing the true and proper meaning of this mysterious language.

2. Very much of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, on which, as we have seen, the prophetic style was fashioned, may be learned from many antient records and monuments still subsisting; and from innumerable hints and passages, scattered through the Greek antiquaries and historians, which have been carefully collected and compared by learned men.

3. The Pagan superstitions of every form and species, which were either derived from Egypt, or conducted on hieroglyphic notions, have been of singular use in commenting on the Jewish prophets. Their Omens, Augury, and Judicial Astrology, seem to have proceeded on symbolic principles; the mystery being only this, That such objects, as in the hieroglyphic pictures were made the symbols of certain ideas, were considered as omens of the things themselves. Thus, the figure of a horse, being the symbol of prosperity and
4. success

success in arms, when a *head* of this animal was found in laying the foundations of Carthage, the Sooth-sayers concluded, that the character of that state would be warlike, and its fortune prosperous : or, thus again, because the *sun* was the common emblem of a King, or supreme governor in any state, an *eclipse* of this luminary was thought to indicate the ruin, or diminution at least, of his power and fortune ; and the superstition is not quite extinct at this day [b].

But, of all the Pagan superstitions, that which is known by the name of *Oneirocritics*, or the art of interpreting dreams, is most directly to our purpose. There is a curious treatise on this subject, which bears the name of Achmer, an Arabian writer ; and another by Artemidorus, an Ephesian,

[b] Hence, the allusion of our great poet,
— or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and *with fear of change*
Perplexes monarchs—*P. L. i. 596.*

who

who lived about the end of the first century [c]. In the former of these collections (for both works are compiled out of preceding and very antient writers) the manner of interpreting dreams, according to the use of the oriental nations, is delivered; as the rules, which the Græcian diviners followed, are deduced in the other. For, light and frivolous as this art was, it is not to be supposed that it was taken up at hazard, or could be conducted without rule; an arbitrary or capricious interpretation of dreams, considered as a mode of divination, being too gross an insult on the common sense of mankind [d]. But the rules, by which both the Greek and Oriental diviners justified their interpretations, appear to have been formed on symbolic principles, that is, on the very same ideas

[c] See these two works, published together, under the title of *Artemidori Daldiani et Achmetis Sereimi F. Oneirocritica*, by Nicolaus Rigaltius. Lutet. 1603.

[d] Non enim credo, *nullo percepto* aut ceteros artifices versari in suo munere, aut eos, qui divinatione utantur, futura prædicere. *Cic. de Fato, c. 6.*

of

of analogy by which the Egyptian hieroglyphics (now grown venerable, and even sacred) were explained. So that the prophetic style, which is all over painted with hieroglyphic imagery, receives an evident illustration from these two works.

I have said, that this superstition was *more immediately to our purpose, than any other*. For some of the more important prophecies are delivered in the way of dreams; and therefore, without doubt, the rules for interpreting the symbols presented to the mind of the prophet in these inspired dreams, were the very same with those that were laid down in the Gentile Oneirocritics. The conclusion, I know, may appear bold and hazardous. But you will reflect, that there is really nothing more strange in applying this mode of interpretation to *dreams*, than to any other species of prophecy; to visions, for instance, or parables, or even, in general, to any part of the prophetic style. The compliance, on the part of the inspirer, is the same on every

every supposition; and only shews that, when the Deity thinks fit to reveal himself to men, he does it in a way that is suitable to their ideas and apprehensions. Nor is any sanction, in the mean time, given, by this accommodation of himself, to the pagan practice of divining by dreams. For, though the same symbols be interpreted in the same manner, yet the *prophecy* doth not depend on the interpretation, but the inspiration of the dream. A casual dream, thus interpreted, is only a dream still; the received sense of the symbols, represented in it, no way inferring the completion of it. But when the Almighty sends the dream, the symbols are of another consideration, and not only signify, but *predict*, an event.

Now, if men will mistake a *barely significant emblem* for a *prophetic inspiration*, the fault is in themselves, and not in the use of the common emblems; which may be the vehicle of a true prophecy, though craft or superstition take occasion from them

to *divine lies* [e]. It follows, that the rules, which the antient diviners observed in explaining symbolic dreams, may be safely and justly applied to the interpretation of symbolic prophecies, and especially to such of them as were delivered in the form of dreams.

4. It is lastly to be observed, that not only the Arabic and other Oriental writers, but even the Greek and Latin poets, may contribute very much to the exposition of the ancient prophets. For these poets abound in strong metaphors and glowing images, which were either copied from the symbolic language of the East, or invented on the same principles of analogy as prevailed in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. So that many expressions, which seem dark and strange in the writings of the Jewish prophets, may be clearly illustrated and familiarized to us, even from classic usage and example.

[e] Ezekiel xiii. 9.

And now from these several sources; that is, from *the scriptures themselves*—from the still *subsisting monuments of Egyptian hieroglyphics*—from *the Gentile ceremonies and superstitions*—and from *the greater works of genius and fancy, transmitted to us both from the Eastern and Western poets*—such a vocabulary of the prophetic terms and symbols may be, nay hath been [*f*], drawn up, as serves to determine the sense of them in the same manner, as any common art or language is explained by its own proper key, or dictionary; and there is, in truth, no more difficulty in fixing the import of the prophetic style, than of any other language or technical phraseology whatsoever.

III. But, if the case be so clear, you may now be tempted to ask, “What then becomes of the obscurity, in which the

[*f*] See Dr. Lancaster’s *Symbolical and Alphabetical Dictionary*, prefixed to his abridgment of the *Commentary on the Revelations*, by Mr. Daubuz.

prophe-

prophecies are said to be involved? and, in particular, how came it to pass, that they may not be as well explained, before the completion, as after it [g]; which yet is constantly denied by writers on this subject, and, even by your own principles, cannot be supposed?"

To this objection, I shall not reply by saying, That the style of the prophets, though intelligible, yet requires much practice in the interpreter to unfold its meaning; for that is the case of many other arts and sciences, which yet are generally understood: nor, that the symbolic terms are frequently capable of several senses, which must needs perplex the interpretation; for there is no common language, in which the plainest words do not frequently admit the same difference of construction, which yet creates no great difficulty to those who attend closely to the

[g] See this objection urged by Mr. Collins in his *Grounds and Reasons*, &c. p. 220. Lond. 1737.

scope of a writer ; I shall not therefore, I say, amuse you with these evasive answers, but reply directly to the purpose of your inquiry, by observing,

“ That there are several methods, or if you will, artifices, by which the inspired writers, under the cover of a symbolic expression, and sometimes even without it, might effectually conceal their meaning, before the completion of a prophecy, though the language, in which they write, be clearly explicable on fixed and stated rules.”

1. When the prophecy is of remote events, the *subject* is frequently not announced, or announced only in general terms. Thus, an *earthquake* is described—a *mountain* is said to be thrown down—a *star*, to fall from heaven ; and so in numberless other instances. Now, an earthquake, in hieroglyphic language, denotes a *revolution in government* ; a mountain is the symbol of a *kingdom*, or *capital city* ; a star, of a *prince*, or *great man* ; but
of

of *what* government, of *what* kingdom, of *what* prince, the prophet speaks, we are not told, and are frequently unable to find out, till a full coincidence of all circumstances, in the event, discloses the secret.

2. The prophetic terms are not only figurative, but sometimes, and in no common degree, hyperbolical (of which the reason will be given hereafter); so that nothing but the event can determine the true size and value of them. This seems to have been the case of those prophecies in the Old Testament, which describe the tranquillity and felicity of Christ's kingdom; and may possibly be the case of those prophecies, in the New, which respect the Millennium.

3. It being the genius of the prophetic style to be ænigmatical, this cast is sometimes purposely given to it, even when the expression is most plain and direct. Thus Jeremiah prophesies of Zedekiah, king of Judah, *that he should be deli-*

vered into the hands of the king of Babylon, that his eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and that he should go to Babylon [b]. Ezekiel, prophesying of the same prince, says, that he should go to Babylon, but that he should not see it, though he should die there [i]. Now Josephus tells us, that the apparent inconsistency of these two prophecies determined Zedekiah to believe neither of them. Yet both were strictly and punctually fulfilled.

4. Lastly, the chief difficulty of all lies in a circumstance, not much observed by interpreters, and, from the nature of it, not *observable* till after the event; I mean, in *a mixed use of the plain and figured style*: so that the prophetic descriptions are sometimes *literal*, even when they appear most figurative; and sometimes, again, they are highly *figurative*, when they appear most plain.

[b] Jeremiah xxxiv. 3.

[i] Ezek. xii. 13.

An instance of *literal* expression, under the mask of *figurative*, occurs in the prophet Nahum, who predicts the overthrow of Nineveh in these words—*With an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof* [Nahum i. 8.]. An *over-running flood* is the hieroglyphic symbol of *desolation by a victorious enemy*: and in this highly figurative sense, an interpreter of the prophecy would, in all likelihood, understand the expression. But the event shewed the sense to be literal: that city being taken, as we know from history, by means of an *inundation*. Of *figurative* expression, under the form of literal, take the following instance from a prophecy of Christ himself; who says to the Jews, *Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days* [John i. 19.]. It was natural enough for the Jews to understand our Lord as speaking of the *temple* at Jerusalem; the rather, as this term had not been, and, I think, could not be, applied to any person, before

H 4

Jesus:

Jesus : to *Him*, it might be so applied ; and we know that *he spake of the temple of his body* [ver. 21.]

The same equivocal use was, sometimes, purposely made of *proverbial expressions*, as learned men have observed [*k*].

I omit many other causes of obscurity in the prophecies ; such as the seeming incredibility, sometimes, of the things predicted—the undefined chronology and geography — the intricacy of the method — and many other considerations. But you will collect from these brief hints, respecting the *expression* only, that, though the symbolic language be reducible to rule, and therefore, in the main, sufficiently intelligible, yet that there is room enough for the introduction of so much obscurity into the prophetic writings, as may answer the ends of the inspirer, and conceal the full meaning of them from the most sagacious interpreter, till it be revealed, in due time, by the event.

[*k*] See Grotius on Matth. xxvi. 23.

Or,

Or, if it be thought that such difficulties as the event removes are not, in their own nature, invincible before it happens, it is still to be considered, that the giver of the prophecy is by supposition divine; and as he therefore foresaw, in framing the texture of it, that such difficulties would in fact be invincible, they served the purpose of a designed concealment just as well as if in nature they were. Whence the conclusion is still the same, That the prophetic style might be the cover of impenetrable obscurities in a prophecy, before its completion, and yet the terms of it be clearly explicable on established rules; the event only enabling the expositor more skilfully and properly to apply those rules.

IV. To conclude this subject: It will now be acknowledged, that the suspicions which have been taken up against the prophetic way of writing, as if it were vague, illusory, or unintelligible, are utterly without foundation. The style of the prophets
was

was the known, authorized style of their age and country, in all writings especially, of a sacred or solemn character; and is even yet in use with a great part of mankind. It further appears, that, as it was understood by those to whom it was addressed, so the principles of which it was formed are discoverable by many obvious methods, and may be applied with success to the interpretation of it at this day.

The prophetic style is then a *sober and reasonable* mode of expression. But this is not all. We may even discern the *expediency*, I had almost said the *necessity*, of this style, considered as the *medium*, or vehicle, of prophetic inspiration.

For we have seen, that the scheme of spiritual prophecy extends through all time; and is so contrived as to adumbrate future and more illustrious events, in preceding and less important transactions: a circumstance, which shews the harmony and connection of the whole scheme, and

is not imitable by any human art, or forethought whatsoever. But now a figurative style is so proper to that end, that we scarcely conceive how it could be accomplished by any other. For thus the expression conforms, at once, to the type, and anti-type: it is, as it were, a robe of state, for the one; and only the ordinary, accustomed dress of the other: as we may see from the prophecies, which *immediately* respect the restoration of the Jews from their antient captivities, and, *ultimately*, their final triumphant return from their present dispersion—from the prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which prefigure, at the same time, the day of judgment—from those concerning the first coming of Christ, which, also, set forth his reign with the saints on earth, and even the glories of his heavenly kingdom—and in a multitude of other instances.

These successive, and so different, schemes of providence could only be signified *together* in a mode of language, that con-

tracted

tracted or enlarged itself, as the occasion required. But such is the singular property of a symbolic style. For none but this hath fold and drapery enough, if I may so speak, to invest the *greater* subjects; while yet (so complying is the texture of this expression) it readily adapts itself to the *less considerable*, which it ennobles only, and not disfigures. The difference is, that what is a metaphor in the former case, becomes an hyperbole in the latter. And this double use of the same symbol is the true account of such figures as are thought most extravagant in the description of the prophets.

We see, then, in every view, how reasonable, how expedient, how divine, the symbolic style is, in such writings as the prophetic. So that if any be disposed, in our days, to take up the complaint of the text, and to upbraid the prophets by asking, *Do they not speak Parables?* we may now take courage to answer, Yes: but *parables*, which, as dark as they are accounted to be,

be, may be well understood ; and, what is more, *parables*, which are so expressed, as to carry an evidence in themselves that they *are*, what they assume to be, of divine inspiration.

S E R M O N X.

The Style and Method of the
A P O C A L Y P S E.

E Z E K I E L XX. 49.

— *They say of me, Doth he not speak
Parables?*

A L L the prophecies of the Old and New Testament are written in *parables*; that is, in highly figurative terms; which yet, on examination, have appeared to be explicable on certain fixed and rational grounds of criticism.

So far, therefore, as any prejudice may have been entertained against the prophecies concerning Antichrist, as if the language of them were too abstruse or fanciful to be understood, enough hath been

been already said to shew, that it is not well founded.

It must, however, be confessed, that the book of *Revelation* [a], which contains the

[a] As to the *authority* of this extraordinary book (although the discussion of this point be foreign to my present purpose), it may be proper to acquaint such persons, as have not made the enquiry for themselves, and are perhaps incapable of making it, with the sentiments which our ablest writers have entertained of it.

Mr. Mede, a capable inquirer, if there ever was any, says roundly—"The Apocalypse hath more human (not to speak of *divine*) authority, than any other book of the New Testament besides, even from the time it was first delivered." *Works*, p. 602.

—And to the same purpose, Sir Isaac Newton—"I do not find any other book of the New Testament so strongly attested, or commented upon so early, as this of the Apocalypse." *Observations on Daniel, &c.* p. 249.

Thus, these two incomparable men. What some minute critics have said, or insinuated to the contrary, is not worth mentioning; farther, than just to observe, that, if the authority of this momentous book be indeed questionable, the church of Rome could hardly have failed long since to make the discovery, or to triumph in it.

Hoc Ithacus velit, et magno mercentur Atridae.

most,

most, and the chief prophecies on the subject of Antichrist, is of a deeper and more mysterious contrivance than any other of the prophetic writings. Whence our next step in this inquiry must be, To trace the CAUSES of that peculiar obscurity; and to suggest as we go along the MEANS by which it hath been, or may be, removed.

The *causes* are to be sought in the STYLE and the METHOD of that book. I say nothing of the *subject*; for, though the *things predicted* may darken a prophecy unfulfilled, the *event* will shew what they are; and it is not necessary, that we should anxiously inquire into the meaning of a prophecy, till it be accomplished.

I. *First*, then, the STYLE of the Revelations (for I mean not to consider it with regard to the Greek tongue in which it is composed, or to the Hebrew idiom with which it is coloured), The *style*, I say, being symbolical, like that of the other prophecies,

prophecies, must, in general, be explained on the same principles, that is, must be equally intelligible in both. Yet, if we attend nicely to the style of this prophecy, some difference will be found, in *the choice of the symbols*, and in *the continuity of the symbolic form*.

1. To explain my meaning, on the first article, I must observe, That, though the prophetic style abounds in *hieroglyphic* symbols, properly so called, yet the Israelites, when they adopted that style, did not confine themselves to the old Egyptian stock of symbols; but, working on the same grounds of analogy, superadded many others, which their own circumstances and observations suggested to them. Their divine ritual, their civil customs, their marvellous history, and even the face and aspect of their country, afforded infinite materials for the construction of fresh symbols: and these, when they came into common use, their prophets freely and largely employed. Thus, *incense*, from the religious use of it

in the Mosaical service, denotes *prayer, or mental adoration* [b]—*to tread a wine-press* from their custom of pressing grapes, signifies *destruction, attended with great slaughter* [c]—*to give water in the wilderness*, in allusion to the miraculous supply of that element, during the passage of the Israelites through the wilderness to the holy land, is the emblem of *unexpected relief in distress* [d]—and, to mention no more, a *forest*, such as Lebanon, abounding in lofty cedars, represents a *great city, with its flourishing ranks of inhabitants* [e]; just as, a *mountain*, from the situation of the Jewish temple on mount Moria, is made for to stand for the *Christian Church* [f].

Now, though the symbols of this class be occasionally dispersed through the old prophets, yet they are more frequent, and much thicker sown, in the Revelations: so that to a reader, not well versed in the

[b] Mal. i. 11.

[d] Isaiah xl. 20.

[f] Isaiah ii. 2.

[c] Lament. i. 15.

[e] Ezek. xx. 47.

Jewish story and customs, this difference may add something to the obscurity of the book.

If you ask the *reason* of this difference, it is plainly this. The scene of the apocalyptic visions is laid, not only in Judæa, but in the temple at Jerusalem; whence the imagery is, of course, taken. It was natural for the writer to draw his allusions from Jewish objects, and especially from the ceremonial of the temple-service. Besides, the declared scope of the prophecy being to predict the fortunes of the Christian church, what so proper as to do this under the cover of Jewish ideas; the law itself, as we have before seen, and as St. Paul expressly tells us, having been so contrived, as to present the *shadow* of that future dispensation?

This then (and for the reason assigned) is ONE distinguishing character of the Apocalyptic style. But the difficulty of interpretation, arising from it, cannot be considerable; or, if it be, may be overcome by

an obvious method, by a careful study of the Jewish history and law.

2. The OTHER mark of distinction, which I observed in the style of this book, is the *continuity* of the symbolic manner. Parables are frequent, indeed, in the old prophets, but interspersed with many passages of history, and have very often their explanation annexed. This great parable of St. John is, throughout, carried on in its own proper form, without any such interruption, and, except in *one* instance [g], without any express interpretation of the parabolic terms.

Now, the prophecy, no doubt, must be considerably obscured by this circumstance. But then let it be considered, that we have proportionable *means* of understanding it. For, if the symbols be continued, they are still but the *same* [b], as had been before in

[g] Chap. xvii.

[b] The learned Bishop Andrews says expressly—
 “You shall scarce find a phrase in the Revelations of St. John that is not taken out of Daniel, or some other prophet.” *Vix reperias apud Johannem phrasin aliquam,*
 use

use with the elder prophets; whose writings, therefore, are the proper and the certain key of the *Revelations*.

From these distinctive characters, then, of the Apocalyptic style [i], nothing more can be inferred, than the necessity of studying *the Law, and the Prophets*, in order to understand the language of this last and most mysterious revelation. And what is more natural, nay, what can be thought more divine, than that, in a system, composed of two dependent dispensations, the study of the former should be made necessary to the comprehension of the latter? and

nisi vel ex Daniele, vel ex aliquo prophetâ desumptam.
Resp. ad Bellarm. Apol. p. 234.

[i] An eminent writer gives an exact idea of it in these words—"The style [of the Revelations] is very
" prophetic, as to the things spoken; and very he-
" braizing, as to the speaking of them. Exceeding
" much of the old prophets language and matter ad-
" duced to intimate new stories; and exceeding much
" of the Jews language and allusion to their customs
" and opinions, thereby to speak the things more fa-
" miliarly to be understood." Dr. LIGHTFOOT,
Harm. of the N. T. p. 154. London, 1655.

that the very uniformity of style and colouring, in the two sets of prophecies, should admonish us of the intimate connection which each has with the other, to the end that we might the better conceive the meaning, and fathom the depth, of the divine councils in *both*?

But, without speculating further on the final purposes of this Judicial and Symbolical character, so strongly impressed on the Apocalypse; it must evidently appear, that the difficulties of interpretation, occasioned by it, are not invincible; nay, that to an attentive and rightly-prepared interpreter, they will scarce be any difficulties at all [*k*].

[*k*] I have heard it affirmed, on good grounds, that the late Dr. Samuel Clarke, being asked in conversation by a friend, Whether, as he had taken much pains to interpret the other books of Scripture, he had never attempted any thing on the Revelations? replied, *He had not; but that, notwithstanding, he thought he understood every word of it.* Not meaning, we may be sure, that he knew how to apply every part of that prophecy, but that he understood the *phraseology* in which it was written; which a man, so conversant as he was in the style of scripture, might very well do.—Calvin,

I proceed, then,

II. To the SECOND, and more considerable cause of the obscurities found in this prophecy, the METHOD in which it is composed.

The other prophecies have, doubtless, their difficulties, arising from the abrupt manner in which, agreeably to the oriental genius, they are delivered : But then, being short and unconnected with each other, the apparent disorder of those prophecies has rarely any sensible effect in preventing the right application of them. The case is different with the prophecies contained in this book ; for, having been all delivered at once, and respecting a series of events which were to come to pass successively in the history of the Christian

indeed, has been commended for making the opposite declaration : And, it may be, with good reason : For (not to derogate in any respect from the character of this great man) the language of the scriptures, and especially of the prophetic scriptures, was in no degree so well understood in his time, as it was in that of Dr. S. Clarke.

Church, it is reasonable to expect that some certain and determinable method should be observed in the delivery of them ; and the true secret of that method, whatever it be, must be investigated, before we can, with success, apply any single prophecy to its proper subject.

The *first*, and most obvious expectation of a reader is, that the events, predicted in this prophecy, should follow each other in the order of the prophecy itself, or that the series of the visions should mark out and determine the succession of the subjects to which they relate. But there is reason to think, on the face of the prophecy, that this method is not observed.

A *second* conclusion would, then, be hastily taken up, that there is no regular method at all in these visions ; but that each is to be applied singly, and without any reference to the rest, to such events as it might be found, in some tolerable degree, to suit : And then it is plain, that Fancy would have too much scope afforded her,

her, in the interpretation of these visions, to produce any firm and settled conviction, that they were rightly and properly applied. Yes, as this idea of the Apocalypse would favour the laziness, the precipitancy, the presumption, and, very often, the malignity of the human mind, it is no wonder that it should be readily and eagerly embraced. And, in fact, it was to this preconceived notion of a general disorder in the texture of these prophecies, that the little progress, which, for many ages, had been made in the exposition of them, is chiefly to be ascribed.

But then, *lastly*, if neither the order of the prophecy be that of the events, nor a total disorder in the construction of it can be reasonably allowed; the question is, By what *rules* was it composed, and on what ideas of *method* is it to be explained?

This question, as obvious as it seems, was not presently asked; and, when it was asked, not easily answered. The clear light, indeed, which the Reformation had let in
on

on some parts of this prophecy, and a spirit of inquiry, which sprang up with the revival of Letters, excited a general attention to this mysterious book. But, as each interpreter brought his own hypothesis along with him, the perplexities of it were not lessened, but increased, by so many discordant schemes of interpretation: And the issue of much elaborate inquiry was, that the book itself was disgraced by the fruitless efforts of its commentators, and on the point of being given up as utterly impenetrable, when a sublime Genius arose, in the beginning of the last century, and surprized the learned world with that great desideratum, *A Key to the Revelations*.

This extraordinary person was, JOSEPH MEDE: of whose character it may not be improper to give a slight sketch, before I lay before you the substance of his discoveries.

HE was a candid, sincere man; disinterested, and unambitious; of no faction in religion or government (both which began

gan in his time to be over-run with factions), but solely devoted to the love of truth, and to the investigation of it. His learning was vast, but well chosen and well digested; and his understanding, in no common degree, strong and capacious.

With these qualities of the head and heart, he came to the study of the prophecies, and especially of the Revelations; but with so little *bigotry* for the scheme of interpretation concerning Antichrist, that, as he tells us himself, *he had even conceived some prejudice against it* [l]; and, what is stranger still in a man of his inventive genius, with so little *enthusiasm* in his temper for *any* scheme of interpretation whatsoever, that, when he had made his great discovery, he was in no haste to publish it to the world [m]; and, when at

[l] "As for me, I am conscious of my weakness and unworthiness; being, when these kind of thoughts first possessed me, looking another way with a prejudice incompatible to this." *General Pref. to Mede's Works*, p. 20, from a MS. Letter.

[m] He printed only a few copies of his *Clavis Apoc-*
length

length he did this, he was still less in haste to apply it, that is, to shew its important use in explaining the Apocalyptic visions [n]. Cool, deliberate, and severe, in forming his judgments, he was so far from being obsequious to the fancies of other men, that he was determined only by the last degree of evidence, to acquiesce in any conclusions of his own [o].

calypica in 1627, at his own expence, and for the use of his friends. *Pref. to his Commentary.*

[n] His Commentary, on the principles of his *Clavis*, did not appear till 1632.

[o] "I am by nature *cunctabundus* in all things; but in this [his Exposition] let no man blame me, if I take more pause than ordinary." MS. Letter in *Gen. Pref.* p. 22. And again, in a Letter of reply *ad animadversiones Ludovici de Dieu*, "Eo ingenio sum (delicatus, an moroso) ut, nisi ubi interpretatio commodè et absque salebris eat, nunquam mihi satisfacere soleam." *WORKS*, p. 569. Yet of this *sage* man, could the Bishop of Meaux allow himself to speak thus negligently—*Il s'est rendu de nos jours célèbre en Angleterre PAR SES DOCTES REVERIES sur l'Apocalypse*. *Hist des Var.* l. xiii. p. 257. But M. de Meaux knew what he did, when he *affected* this contempt of Joseph Mede. He was then at liberty to turn himself, from the ablest advocate of the Protestant cause, to the *weakest*; I mean,

In short, with no *vanity* to indulge (for he was superior to this last infirmity of ingenious men [*p*])—with no *interest* in view (for the interest of Churchmen lay at that time, as he well understood, in a different quarter [*q*])—with no *spleen* to gratify (for M. Jurieu, whose indiscretions afforded, indeed, ample scope for the raillery of this lively prelate. Mr. Mede was not a man to be confuted in this way; and still less by a fanciful and ill-supported *Exposition of the Apocalypse*.

[*p*] As appears from his backwardness to publish his discoveries, and from his unconcern about the reception of them. But see his Letter to Mr. Hartlib, Ep. 96, p. 881; and compare with his answer to Dr. Twisse, Ep. 51, p. 811. See also Ep. 98, to Mr. Hartlib, Aug. 9, 1638, not long before his death, in which are these words:

“ I have not been very obtrusive unto men, to acquaint them with my notions and conceits—for some of them that are but lately known have lain by me above these twenty years.” P. 883.

[*q*] *The point of the Pope's being Antichrist, as a dead fly, marred the savour of THAT OINTMENT*—meaning the merit he had of being known to entertain some opinions, then much cherished by the ruling clergy. Ep. 56, p. 818. He says afterwards of himself, in the same Letter,—*I thank God, I never made any thing hitherto the caster of my resolution, but reason and evidence, on what side soever the advantage or disadvantage fell.*

even

even neglect and solitude could not engender this unmanly vice in him [*r*])—with no oblique purposes, I say, which so often mislead the pens of other writers; but with the single, unmixed love of truth, he dedicated his great talents to the study of the prophetic scriptures, and was able to unfold in the MANNER I am now to represent to you, this mysterious prophecy of the Revelations.

He had observed, that the miscarriage of former interpreters had been owing, chiefly, to a vain desire of finding their own sense in this prophecy, rather than the

[*r*] His friends speak much of his chearful disposition.—But I draw this conclusion from the tenour of his *life* and *writings*; and, above all, from that famous declaration which he made in confidence to a friend, that, *if he might but obtain a Donative sine curâ, of so much value as, together with his fellowship [of Christ's College in Cambridge], should enable him to keep a horse, for his recreation, he would set up his staff for this world.* App. to his Life, p. 40.—The simplicity of this declaration makes one confident of it's truth. And a man of so moderate desires was in no danger of having his temper *soured* by disappointments.

sense

sense of the prophet. Laying aside, then, all hypotheses whatsoever, he sat down to the book itself, and resolved to know nothing more of it, than what the frame and texture of its composition might clearly reveal to him. He considered the whole as a naked recital of facts, literally expressed; and not as a prophetic scheme, mystically represented. In this way of inquiry, he discerned, that several parts of the history, whatever their secret and involved meaning might be, were *homogeneous*, and *contemporary*; that is, they related to the same subject, and were comprised within the same period; and this, though they were not connected in the order of the narration, but lay dispersed in different quarters of it. These several sets of historical passages (or, of *Visions*, to speak in the language of the book itself) he carefully analyzed and compared; shewed, from circumstances, not imagined, but found, in the history, their mutual relation and correspondence; and established his

his conclusions, as he went along, not in a loose way of popular conjecture, but in the strictest forms of Geometric reasoning. The coincident histories, thus classed and scrutinized, he distinguished by the name of **SYNCHRONISMS**; and gave them to the learned world, in this severe scientific form, without further comment or illustration, under the title of **CLAVIS APOCALYPTICA, OR A KEY TO THE REVELATIONS.**

In considering this discovery, which did so much honour to the profound genius and accurate investigation of its author, one clearly perceives how it serves to the end proposed.

First, it appears, that the order of the Visions is not that of the events; in other words, that the prophecy is not to be so explained, as if the events, predicted in it, followed each other in the same train as the Visions. For the *facts*, which constitute the scheme or fable of the prophecy, literally and historically considered, do not succeed to each other in that train; there-
fore

fore the *events*, whatever they may be, which those facts adumbrate, most certainly cannot.

Secondly, It appears what the true, or chronological, order of the Visions, is; namely, that, which the nature and connexion of the things transacted in them points out and declares. So that, if the real time of any one Vision can be shewn, the relative time of the rest may be easily settled. For (to quote Mr. Mede's own words) *such Visions, as contemporate with that already ascertained, are of course to be applied to the same times; while such as, in the order of the story, precede that Vision, are to be referred to preceding events, and those, which follow it, are in like manner to be explained of subsequent transactions* [s].

[s] Siquidem, quæ isti tuo Vaticinio jam, ut dixi, cognito, cætera contemporaverint Vaticinia, iisdem proculdubio temporibus sunt applicanda: quæ autem præcedunt, non nisi de præcedaneis; quæ succedunt, pariter de succedaneis eventibus sunt interpretanda. *Clavis Apocal. Works*, p. 432.

By this means, the whole plan or method of the Apocalypse will be laid down. The several synchronical prophecies will thus fall in their proper places: and there will be no doubt of the relative situation, which each holds in the general system.

Thirdly, as we now see the true order of the prophecies (though for the wisest reasons, no doubt, the order, in which they are delivered, be sometimes different); so it is to be observed, that the knowledge of this order is a great restraint on the fancy of an expositor; who is not now at liberty to apply the prophecies to events of any time, to which they appear to suit, but to events only falling within that time, to which they belong in the course of this pre-determined method. And if to this restriction, which of itself is considerable, we add *another*, which arises from the necessity of applying, not one, but many prophecies (which are thus shewn to synchronize with each other) to the *same* time, we can hardly conceive how an interpretation

tation should keep clear of these impediments, and make its way through so many interfering checks, unless it be the *true* one. Just as when a Lock (to take the author's allusion) is composed of many and intricate wards, the *Key*, that turns easily within them, and opens the Lock, can only be that which properly belongs to it.

After all, it may be difficult, I know, to convey a distinct idea of the uses, to which this synchronical method serves, to those who have not read, and even studied, Mr. Mede's work. But the sum of the matter is this, That the order of the events and of the Visions is *not* the same—that the *true* order of the events is to be sought in certain characters, not fancied at pleasure, but inserted, in the Visions themselves — and, lastly, that the whole book of the Revelations being thus resolvable into a particular determinate order, in which the several sets of synchronical prophecies regularly succeed to each other, no exposition of this book can be admitted, that

does not refer every single prophecy to its true place in the system, and provide at the same time that no violence be done to any other prophecies which synchronize with it.

And thus much concerning the TRUE ORDER of the Apoclypse; deduced, you see, from no precarious hypothetic reasonings, but from notes and characters, inclosed in that book; that is, from intrinsic arguments, which have their evidence in themselves, and conclude alike on every supposition.

If we would know more distinctly what the EXTERIOR FORM of it is; and how it comes to differ so widely from the plan of a chronological arrangement; here too our sagacious expositor will give us satisfaction. For, in bringing together and comparing his synchronisms, he found (what had escaped the attention of all others) that the main body of the prophecy is made up of two [1] great parts; which are also

[1] From ch. iv. to the end of ch. ix: and from ch. x. to the end.

synchro-

synchronical ; so that, setting out from the same goal, and measuring the same space, they both concur in the same end : but with this difference, that the *former* division more immediately regards the affairs of the *Empire* ; the *latter*, those of the *Church*.

Still, this is not all. Our attentive and penetrating commentator further discovered, That the two great component parts of this prophecy, though distinct, are very artificially connected, and shewn to harmonize throughout with each other, by making the same concluding event [*u*], once told, the catastrophe of both. For the *former* part is purposely, and with express warning given [*w*], left unfinished, till a summary deduction of the *latter* part down to the same point of time [*x*], (by way of prelude to the more extended visions of this last part, which follow to the end of the book, and to signify, that both parts

[*u*] The sounding of the seventh trumpet.

[*w*] Ch. x. 7.

[*x*] Ch. xi. 15.

are contemporary) furnished the occasion of shutting up the two prophecies together in one common term: which, however, had the appearance of being misplaced, till the detection of this singular contrivance, by means of the synchronisms, pointed out the use and end of the present disposition [y].

[y] The reader may form a distinct idea of the method, in which the *whole* book of the Apocalypse is disposed, by observing that it is resolvable into THREE great parts.

The FIRST part, is that of the EPISTLES to the seven churches, contained in the three first chapters, and is not at all considered by Mr. Mede.

The SECOND part (with which Mr. Mede begins his commentary) is that of the SEALED BOOK, from ch. iv. to ch. x; and contains *the fates of the Empire*, or its civil revolutions, yet, with a reference, still, to the state and fortune of the Christian Church.

The THIRD part, is that of the OPEN BOOK, with what follows to the end; and exhibits, in a more minute and extended view, *the fates of the Christian Church*, especially during its Apostacy, and after its recovery from it.

This THIRD division may, further, be considered as consisting of two parts. The FIRST contains, in ch. xi. a summary view of what should befall the

Another cause of the seeming perplexity, in which this Prophecy is involved, is, Christian Church, contemporary with the events deduced in the *second* part concerning the Empire; and is given in this place, in order to connect the *second* and *third* parts, and, to shew their correspondence and contemporaneity. See Mr. Mede's Clavis, p. 424; and Comment. Apocalypt. p. 476.

The *SECOND* part of the last division, from ch. xii. to the end, gives a detailed account of what should befall the Christian Church in distinct, and, several of them, synchronical visions.

It has been thought by some an objection to Mr. Mede's scheme, "That the prophecy of the *open book* (which contains, according to him, all the remaining visions to the end of the Revelations), is not only, for the *subject*, more considerable, but, for the *size* of the volume, larger, than the Prophecy of the *sealed book*; whereas, the name given to it, βιβλαρίδιον, or *little book*, seems very clearly to express the contrary."

If this objection be thought material (for I do not find that Mr. Mede condescends to take any notice of it), it *might*, perhaps, be obviated by supposing, That the *little book* contains the xith chapter, only, being a compendium of the *third* division, and inserted in this place to shew the contemporaneity of the *two last* and principal parts; and that all which follows to the end is to be regarded as a sort of *comment* on the little book, or larger explication of its contents: as if the design had been to consult our weakness, in presenting us, *first*,

That, it being expedient to treat the same subject in different respects, and to give

with an abridged view of a great scheme, and *then* in drawing it out at large, for our more distinct information.

But the *truer* answer to the difficulty I take to be, That the *sealed book* is represented under the idea of a *book*, properly so called, which, upon being opened, presents to the eye the several objects and schemes of the prophecy, distinctly delineated on the *roll*, or volume, when it comes to be unfolded, and which, therefore, must needs be considered as a *large* one. The *open book*, on the other hand, is to be regarded, not as a real, but *metaphorical* book; and is not produced to be read or contemplated, after a gradual evolution of it, but to be *eaten* at once by the prophet; like that book to which it alludes, and from which the imagery is taken, in the visions of Ezekiel [ii. 8. and iii. 1, 2, 3.] —to *eat a book*, being, in the hieroglyphics, to *meditate upon*, and to *digest*, its contents. So that this book, to distinguish it from the other, is named a *little book*: not, that the revelations, conveyed by it, are less considerable, or less numerous, than the other, but that the *use*, to which it is put, required only that it should be spoken of as a *book* simply; the diminutive form being here suggested in the term βιβλαρίδιον, that the metaphor of *eating* it might seem the easier, and (because the former *sealed book* was of an immense size) might, under this idea, present itself the more naturally, and give less offence, to the imagination.

different

different views of it, according as two sets of men, the true worshipers and the false, were affected by the fortunes of the Christian Church, this shifting and opposite face of things could not be exhibited together; but was to be set forth in several and successive, though contemporary, visions. Hence, the prophecy is thought to proceed, when, in fact, it stands still, and only presents another prospect of the same transactions.

But I enter no farther into the mysterious contexture of this book; through which, however, the clue of the synchronisms, if well pursued, would safely conduct us. It is enough to my purpose to have shewn, That, as the *Language* of the Revelations is intelligible, so the *Method* is not involved in such intricacies, but that, in general, a regular, a consistent, and, what is more, a *true* [z] conception may be formed of it.

[z] I am not ignorant that many interpreters have thought otherwise. But possibly they have not enough attended to the advice which Mr. Mede used to give to
Whence

Whence no sober man needs be discouraged from reading this book; or will be in danger, I think, of losing either his wits or his reputation in the study of it. For what should hinder a book, though of prophecies, from being understood, when its *method* may be clearly defined, and its *language decyphered*; provided always, that we only interpret a prophecy by the event, and do not take upon us to determine the event by a premature construction of the prophecy?

With this Apocalyptic key then (of which so much has been said), this *key of knowledge*, in my hands, it may now be expected that I should open this *dark parable* of the Revelation, by applying so much of it, at least, as respects Antichrist, to Apostate Papal Rome. But, besides that there would not, in what remains of this course, be

such of his friends as did not enter into his ideas—
EXPENSE. My meaning is, that, if they had possessed the patience, or the sagacity, to understand this great Inventor, before they objected to him, they would perhaps have seen cause to acquiesce in the *Method* pointed out by him, instead of attempting in various ways, and to little purpose, to improve upon it.

room

room enough for a detailed account of the prophecies, *other reasons* restrain me from entering immediately on a task, not less easy perhaps, than amusing. For Interpreters, I think, have generally been too much in haste to apply the prophecies, before they had sufficiently prepared the way for their application: so that, leaving many doubts unresolved, which men of thought and inquiry are apt to entertain on this subject, or not laying before them all the reasons and inducements which should engage their attention to it, their clearest expositions are not received, and possibly not considered.

With regard then to the prophecies, concerning Antichrist, though the chief obstructions in our way seem fairly removed, and it be now evident that there *are* certain grounds, on which the most abstruse of them may be reasonably interpreted; yet, because the application of them is a work of time and industry, many persons, before they undertake it, may desire to know,

What

What GENERAL ARGUMENTS there are, which may assure them, beforehand, that their labour will not be misemployed, and that Papal Rome is, in fact, concerned in the tenour of these prophecies : and, when this demand has been made, they may further wish to be informed, To what ENDS OR USES this whole inquiry serves ; of importance enough, I mean, to encourage and reward their vigorous prosecution of it ?

These desires and expectations are apparently not unreasonable ; and to satisfy them, in the best manner I can, will be the scope and purpose of the two following Lectures.

S E R-

S E R M O N XI.

Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.

LUKE xii. 56.

—*How is it, that ye do not discern this time?*

SO much having been said on the *manner* in which the prophecies, respecting Antichrist, may be interpreted; I imagine that now, at length, ye are disposed to ask, On what GENERAL GROUNDS we affirm, that the Church of Rome is actually concerned in them?

To resolve this question, it will be sufficient to set before you, in few words, some of the more obvious *notes* or *characters* by which Antichrist is marked out in the prophecies; such, and so many of them, as

142 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

may convince you, that they are fairly applicable to the Church of Rome; and that, taken together, they cannot well admit any other application.

Of these prophetic characters,

1. The FIRST I shall mention is, *That we are to look for Antichrist within the proper limits of the Roman empire.*

On this head, there is no controversy among those who acknowledge the authority of the prophet Daniel, and can be none: for that prophet, in his famous vision of the four kingdoms, says expressly, that, among the ten kingdoms into which the fourth, or Roman, shall be divided, ANOTHER shall arise [a]; that is, as all interpreters agree, the kingdom of Antichrist. So that this power, whatever it be, must have its birth and seat within the compass

[a] Dan. vii. 7, 8.—I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast—had *ten horns*. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them *another little horn*—Compare with ver. 24.—The ten horns out of this kingdom are *ten kings* (or kingdoms) that shall arise: and *another shall arise after them.*

of

of the ten kingdoms, that is, of the Roman empire, when, in some future time from the giving of Daniel's prophecy, it should be so divided.

But, to fix the station of the antichristian power more precisely, it is to be observed, that, as the four kingdoms of Daniel, considered in succession to each other, form a *prophetic chronology* [b]; so, in another view, they form a *prophetic geography* [c], being considered, in the eye of prophecy, as *co-existent*, as still *alive*, and subsisting together, when the dominion of all, but the last, was taken away [d].

In consequence of this idea, which Daniel gives us of his four kingdoms, so much only is to be reckoned into the description of each kingdom, as is peculiar to each; the remainder being part of some other kingdom, still supposed to be in being, to

[b] Mede, p. 712.

[c] Sir Isaac Newton, p. 31.

[d] Dan. vii. 11, 12.—Concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their *dominion taken away*: yet their *lives were prolonged* for a season and a time.

which

144 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist*

which it properly belongs. Thus, the **SECOND**, or Persian kingdom, does not take in the nations of Chaldæa and Affyria, which make the body of the *first* kingdom; nor the **THIRD**, or Græcian kingdom, the countries of Media and Persia, being the body of the *second*. In like manner, the **FOURTH**, or Roman kingdom, does not, in the contemplation of the prophet, comprehend those provinces which make the body of the *third*, or Græcian kingdom, but such only as constitute its own body, that is, the provinces on this side of Greece: where, therefore, we are to look for the *eleventh*, or Antichristian kingdom, as being to start up *among* the ten, into which the Roman kingdom should be divided.

We see then that, as Antichrist was to arise within the Roman kingdom, so his station is farther limited to the European part of that kingdom, or to the *western empire*, properly so called.

This observation (which is not mine, but Sir Isaac Newton's) is the better worth making,

making, because, in fact, the papal sovereignty never extended farther than the western provinces; at least, could never gain a firm and permanent footing in the countries which lie east of the Mediterranean sea. But, whether you admit this interpretation, or not, it is still clear that Antichrist was to arise somewhere within the limits of the Roman empire. In what *part* of that empire he was to make his appearance, we certainly gather from,

II. A SECOND prophetic note or character of this power, which is, *That his seat and throne was to be the city of Rome itself.*

The prophet Daniel acquaints us only, that the power, we call Antichristian, would spring up from *among* the ruins of the fourth, or Roman kingdom: But St. John, in the *Revelations*, fixes his residence in the *capital city* of that kingdom. For, when, in one of his visions, he had been shewn a portentous *beast with seven heads and ten horns, and a woman arrayed in purple*, riding

146 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

upon him, an Angel is made to interpret this symbolic vision in the following words:

—The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth—and the ten horns, which thou sawest, are ten kings—and the woman, which thou sawest, is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth [e].

Words cannot be more determinate than these. The *woman*, that rides this BEAST, that is, the fourth empire, in its last state of *ten horns*, or divided into ten kingdoms, is that Antichristian power of which we are now inquiring. She is seated on *seven hills*; nay, she is *that great city, which reigneth* [that is, in St. John's time which *reigned*] over the *kingdoms of the earth*. Rome, then, is the throne of Antichrist; or is that city which shall one day be Antichristian. There is no possibility of evading the force of these terms.

It hath been said, that Constantinople too was situated on seven hills. It may be

[e] Rev. xvii. 3, 4. 9. 12. 18.

so : But Constantinople did not, in the time of this vision, *reign over the kings of the earth*. Besides, if its *dominion* had not been mentioned, *the city on seven hills* is so characteristic of Rome, that the name itself could not have pointed it out more plainly ; as must be evident to all those, who recollect what the Latin writers have said on this subject.

The—*septem domini montes*—of one [f] poet is well known ; and seems the abridgement of a still more famous line in another [g]—

Septem urbs alta jugis, toto quæ præsidet orbi :

To which St. John's ideas of a *woman, seated on seven hills, and reigning over the kings of the earth*, so exactly corresponds, that one sees no difference between the poet and the prophet ; except that the *latter* personifies his ideas, as the genius of the prophetic style required.

[f] Martial. l. iv. ep. 64.

[g] Propert. l. III. ix. 57.

But a passage in Virgil is so much to our purpose, that it merits a peculiar attention. This poet, in the most finished of his works, had been celebrating the praises of a country life, which he makes the source and origin of the Roman greatness :

Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini;

Hanc Remus et frater : sic fortis Etruria crevit ;
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma [b].

The encomium, we see, is made with that gradual pomp which is familiar to Virgil. And the last line (from its majestic simplicity, the noblest, perhaps, in all his writings) one would naturally expect should close the description. Yet he adds, to the surprise, and, I believe, to the disappointment of most readers,

Septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.

Had we found this passage in any other of the Latin poets, we should have been apt to question the judgment of the writer ; and to suspect, that, in attempting to rise upon himself, he had fallen, unawares, into an evident anti climax. But the cor-

[b] Georg. l. ii. ver. 532.

rect elegance of Virgil's manner, and his singular talent in working up an image, by just degrees, to the precise point of perfection, may satisfy us, that he had his reason for going on, where we might expect him to stop; which reason can be no other, than that the *seven hills* were necessary to complete his description of the imperial city [*i*]. To an antient Roman, the circumstance of its *situation* was, of all others, the most august and characteristic; and Rome itself was not Rome, till it was contemplated under this idea.

There was ground enough, then, for saying, "that the *name* of Rome could not have pointed out the city *more plainly*." But I go farther, and take upon me to assert, That the *periphrasis* is even more precise, and less equivocal, than the *proper name* would have been, if inserted in the prophecy. For *Rome*, so called, might have stood, like Sodom, or Babylon, simply for an idolatrous City. But the city, *seated*

[*i*] Compare *Æn.* vi. ver. 776, &c.

150 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

on seven hills, and *reigning over the earth*, is the city of Rome itself, and excludes, by the peculiarity of these attributes, any other application.

Nor is it any objection to the remark, now made, that this city, whatever it be, is described by *another* circumstance, not peculiar to Rome, indeed scarce applicable to it; I mean that of its being *seated on many waters* [k]. For these *waters* are not given as a mark of Rome's *natural*, but *political* situation; as the prophetic style might lead one to expect, if the sacred writer had not taken care to prevent all mistake by assuring us, in so many words, *That the waters, where the whore sitteth, are PEOPLES, AND MULTITUDES, AND NATIONS, AND TONGUES* [l].

If it be, further, said, "That the *seven hills* may, likewise, admit a similar construction from the frequent use of *hills*, as emblems of *power*, in hieroglyphic writing, and therefore in prophetic description,"

[k] Rev. xvii. 1.

[l] Ibid. ver. 15.

the remark is very just ; but then, unluckily, there is no such explanation of the *seven hills*, as we have of the *waters*, from the prophet himself ; while yet it could not escape him, that such explanation was more than commonly necessary, in this case, to prevent the reader from applying the *seven hills* to the best known city in the world, then subsisting in all its glory, and universally acknowledged by this distinctive character of its situation.

Should it, lastly, be alledged, “ That the explanation is subjoined to the figure, for that the prophet adds immediately in the following verse—*and there are seven kings*—meaning, that the *seven hills*, just mentioned, were to be taken as emblems only of *seven kings* ; ” I reply, that the *seven hills*, in the figurative sense of the term *hills*, naturally suggested, and elegantly introduce, the *seven kings* ; but that the *former*, nevertheless, are clearly to be distinguished from the *latter*. For it is not said—*and the seven hills are seven kings*—as it was before said

152 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

—*the seven heads are seven hills—but—*
 AND *there are seven kings*—plainly advancing a step further in the prophecy, and pointing out a new characteristic distinction of the seven-hilled city, arising from the different forms of Government through which it had passed.

The truth is (as Mr. Mede well observes [m]) *the seven heads of the beast are a DOUBLE TYPE: first, they signify the seven hills, on which the city is placed; and, then, the seven kings, or governments, to which it had been subject; but still on those seven hills, for which reason the same type is made to signify both; But, if the type had been designed to carry a single sense, and kings had been that sense, as explicatory of hills, it had been very preposterous to give the interpretation of the type, and then to interpret the interpretation, unless the expression*

[m] *Septem BESTIÆ capita, duplex typus: primò, septem montes seu colles sunt, super quos urbs Bestiæ metropolis sita est; deinde, septem quoque, idque in iisdem (quod unitas typi denotat) Collibus, Regum seu Dynastarum successivorum ordines.* Works, p. 524.

had been so guarded as to convey this purpose in the most distinct manner. As it is now put, there are manifestly TWO SENSES, and ONE TYPE [8].

On the whole, there can be no doubt concerning *the great city on seven hills*. It can be no other, than the city of Rome itself: In other words, the antichristian is a *Roman Power*.

Still, this Roman power, for any thing that hath hitherto appeared, may be a *Pagan* and *Civil* power. But,

III. The prophecies seem very clearly to point it out to us, *as an ECCLESIASTICAL* and, in name and pretence, at least, a *CHRISTIAN power*.

To begin again with the prophet Daniel. He tells us, that the Horn which shall arise

[n] The whole passage in the original stands thus—
αἱ ἐπὶ κεφαλαί, ὅτε εἰσὶν ἐπὶ, ὅτε ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ' αὐτῶν,
καὶ βασιλεῖς ἐπὶ εἰσιν—of which the following is the
literal translation—The SEVEN HEADS are *seven hills*,
where the woman sitteth upon them, AND are *seven*
kings—Every one sees that the connective particle,
AND, refers to *heads*, and not to *hills*.

after,

154. *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

after, and from *among*, the ten horns, that is, the Antichristian kingdom, as before explained, shall be DIVERSE from the ten kingdoms, out of which it shall arise [o]. "But a kingdom may be *diverse* from other kingdoms in various respects." Without doubt. And, therefore, we cannot certainly conclude from this single text, that the *diversity*, mentioned, will consist in its being a spiritual kingdom. Yet, if ye reflect that this *diversity* is given, as the characteristic mark of the antichristian kingdom; that, although there may be other and smaller differences between kingdoms, the greatest and most signal is that which subsists between a temporal and spiritual power; nay, that Government, as such, is, and can only be, of two sorts, civil and spiritual, as corresponding to the two constituent parts of *man*, (the subject of all government in this world), the Soul,

[o] Dan. vii. 24.—The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; and another shall arise after them, and He shall be *diverse* from the first—
and

and the Body : Taking, I say, these considerations along with you, ye cannot esteem it a very harsh and violent interpretation, if, without looking any farther, we incline to think that this *diversity* of regimen, so emphatically pointed out, respects that great and essential difference in human government *only*. At least, it will be admitted, that, if, from other and more express testimonies, the government of Antichrist appear to be a spiritual government, we shall, then, be authorized to put such a construction on Daniel's prophecy, as will reach the full force and import of his expression. Such a kingdom must be allowed to be eminently *diverse* from secular kingdoms. So that the harmony between the prophets on this subject will be clear and striking.

Now, such a testimony we seem to find in the Apostle St. Paul ; who, prophesying of *the man of Sin*, or Antichrist, to be revealed in the latter days, makes it a distinguishing part of his character, *That he*

SITTETH

156 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD [p]. Consider the force of these words. A power, *seated in the temple of God*, can be nothing but a power suitable to that place, or a *spiritual* power : just as a power, *seated in the throne of Cæsar*, could only be interpreted of a *civil* power.

Nor say, because the context runs thus—“ that he, AS GOD, sitteth in the temple of God, SHEWING himself that he is GOD — that therefore it only means his claiming *divine honours* : a degree of blasphemy, very applicable to a *civil* power.” This objection has clearly no force : because his *sitting in the temple of God* was the very *means* (if we rightly apply this prophecy) by which the man of sin rose to that abominable pre-eminence. It was by virtue of his *spiritual*, that he assumed a *divine* character. So that the phrase—*as God*—and that other—*shewing himself that he is God*—sets before us, indeed, the extrava-

[p] 2 Theff. ii. 4.

gant

gant height to which the man of sin aspired, and to which he ascended; but no way invalidates the conclusion from his sitting in the temple of God—that he was a *spiritual power*. Rather, we see the propriety of this conclusion: because the text, thus understood, suggests the *way* in which the man of sin accomplished his blasphemous purpose: His *success* arose from his *station* in the temple. On the other hand, a power *sitting in the throne of Cæsar* might sit there *as God*, and might *view himself that he was God* (as many of the Roman Emperors did): So that the clause—*sitting in the temple of God*—has evidently no peculiar fitness, as applied to the usurpation of divine honours by a *civil-tyrant*; whereas we see it has that fitness, when applied to a *spiritual* tyrant. The context therefore proves nothing against the interpretation here proposed and defended.

But, what is this *temple of God*? The temple at Jerusalem, it will be said; the only temple, so called, then subsisting in
the

138 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist*

the world [q]. Admit this to be the literal sense of the words. Yet ye remember so much of what hath been said concerning the prophetic style, as not to think it strange, that the literal sense should involve in it another, a *mystical* meaning. And this, without any uncertainty whatsoever. For so, the term, *Jew*, means a *Christian*; the term, *David*, means *Christ*: the *incense* of the temple-service means the *prayers* of Christians; plainly and confessedly so, in numberless instances. Agreeably to this analogical use of Jewish terms, in the style of the prophets, *the temple of God*, nay, *the temple of Jerusalem* [r] (if that had

[q] See Grotius, on the place: who applies this prophecy to Caius Cæsar, and thinks it was fulfilled when that Emperor commanded his statue to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem. A strange conjecture! which many writers, and very lately an excellent prelate has well confuted. Bishop Newton's *Diff. on the Prophecies*, vol. ii. p. 375.

[r] *Hierosolyma* in scriptis prophetarum occurrit ut emblemata alterius cujusdam *Hierosolymæ*, mysticè sic dicendæ; quæ *Hierosolyma* non potest esse urbs quædam in montibus Zione & Acta constructa, qualis fuit antiqua
been

Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist. 159

been the expression) must, in all reason, be interpreted of the *Christian church*; and could not, in the prophetic language, be interpreted otherwise. When, therefore, Antichrist is said to *sit in the temple of God*, it is the same thing as if it had been said of him, *That he sitteth, or ruleth, in the church of Christ*. Now, substitute these words—the *church of Christ*—in the room of those other words—the *temple of God*; and see, if St. Paul, supposing his purpose had been to express a spiritual power in opposition to a civil; see, I say, if St. Paul could have conveyed that purpose more plainly.

Still, we have another, and, if possible, a more decisive testimony in the *Revelations*. For, among the different views, which St. John gives us of Antichrist, in so many distinct visions, one is set before us in the following manner—*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had*

illa; sed oportet esse rem spirituales, in quâ attributa antiquæ Hierosolymæ mysticè demonstrantur.

VITRINGA, *Apocalyps. Exp. & Illustr.* p. 762.

160 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a Dragon [s]. Now, if we had known nothing more of these symbols, than what the obvious qualities of the animals themselves suggested to us, we could only have inferred, that this ruling power (for that is the idea conveyed by the term, *Beast*) would put on the appearance of a gentle and pacific administration: I say, the *appearance*; for what its *real* character was to be is clearly enough expressed in what follows, that this lamb-like beast *spake as a Dragon*. But, when we further reflect, that *horns*, in the prophetic style, are the emblems of *power*, and that a *Lamb* is the peculiar, the *appropriated* symbol of Christ, *the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* [t], and is constantly so employed throughout this whole prophecy of the Revelations, we must, of necessity, conclude, that *a beast with the horns of a lamb* can only be a state, or person, pretending to such powers as Christ exercised, and

[s] Rev. xiii. 11.

[t] John i. 29.

his

his Religion authoriseth; that is, powers, *not of this world*, but purely spiritual.

The other symbol of a *Dragon* confirms this conclusion. For a *Dragon*, in the prophecies, is the known symbol of the old Roman Government in its pagan, persecuting state. When, therefore, it is said that the beast *spake as a Dragon*, the meaning is, That Antichrist should assume the highest tone of civil authority in promoting his tyrannous purposes, though he cloaked his fierce pretensions under the meek semblance of a spiritual character. Taken together, these two symbols speak as plainly as symbolic terms can speak, That Antichrist was to be a *religious person*, acting in the spirit of a *secular tyrant*. So exactly is he characterised by the poet Mantuan, addressing himself to one of the Popes—

*Ense potens gemino, cujus vestigia adorant
Cæsar et aurato vestiti murice reges.*

On the whole, I leave it to be considered, whether, when the prophecies pro-

162 *Prophetic* CHARACTERS of *Antichrist*.

nounce of Antichrist, that he should be a power *diverse* from all others — that he should *fit in the temple of God* — and that he should have *the horns of a lamb* — I leave it, I say, to your consideration, whether it be not plain that this extraordinary power, a Roman power, and residing at Rome, was to be a *Christian and Ecclesiastical*, and not a *Pagan and Civil* power.

IV. Another obvious character of Antichrist, or rather *complication* of characters, is that triple brand, impressed upon him, of a *tyrannical, intolerant, and idolatrous*, power.

The prophets hold him up to us as *reigning*, or exercising an oppressive and supereminent dominion *over the kings of the earth*, that is, of the western empire [u]; as *making war with the lamb, and the saints who receive not his mark in their foreheads* [w], that is, persecuting good and conscientious Christians, who refuse to

[u] Dan. vii. 8. 20. Rev. xvii. 1. 16, 17.

[w] Dan. vii. 21, Rev. xvii. 14. xiii. 7. 16.

Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist. 163

wear the badge of Antichrist, and to serve under him ; and as another *Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth* [x], that is, as polluted himself with the grossest idolatry, and as corrupting the nations with the same prophane worship.

But these marks, it will be said, have been found upon so many powers, which have appeared in the world, that they cannot be given as the *distinctive* marks of *one*, that is, of the Papal Power ; nay, the Bishop of Meaux goes further, and attempts to shew, by a very refined argument, that the very *terms* of *whoredom* and *fornication*, in which the *last* of these marks, I mean, IDOLATRY, is set forth by the prophet in the *book of Revelations*, make it impossible for us to apply that mark to Rome Christian.

Let us see then, *first*, what force there is in the criticism of this learned Prelate.

That *whoredom*, or *fornication*, in the language of scripture, means *idolatry*, is agreed on all hands, and cannot be dis-

[x] Rev. xvii. 5.

164 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antiebrist.*

puted. Whether the figurative use of this term arose from observing, how constantly that pollution attended idolatrous worship, or how fitly a communication with false gods may be compared with that unlawful commerce; whatever be the ground of the analogy, it is clear to a demonstration, that *whoredom* is but another name for *idolatry*, which, under this idea, is very frequently charged upon the Jews by the antient prophets.

Sometimes, however (without doubt to aggravate the charge), the idolatry of the Jews is considered in the light of *adultery*, that is, of infidelity to the God of Israel, to whom, as to her proper Lord and *Husband*, the Jewish nation had by express stipulation, and in the most solemn manner, contracted herself.

But, notwithstanding this promiscuous application of the terms, *fornication* and *adultery*, to the idolatry of the Jews in the antient prophecies, it hath been remarked by the Bishop of Meaux, "That Babybon,
or

or Rome, in the Revelations, is constantly and uniformly spoken of as a *whore*, and not as an *adulteress*; whence he concludes, that this charge is brought against Pagan Rome only, and not Christian Rome. For, why, he asks, is so much care taken not to impute *adultery* to idolatrous Rome, if it had been a Christian city? when its polluting itself with this crime, contrary to the most express engagements, which Christians take upon themselves, of fidelity to the only true God, might justly deserve, and, in propriety, may seem to require, this opprobrious charge, rather than that other lighter one of *fornication*; whereas, if Pagan Rome be here meant, its idolatry could only be set forth under the idea of *fornication*, and not of *adultery* [y].”

[y] Le saint apôtre a bien pris garde de ne pas nommer la prostituée, dont il parle, une *adultere*, *μοιχάδα*, *μοιχαλίδα*, mais une femme publique—sans jamais avoir employé le mot d'*adultere*; tant il étoit attentif à éviter l'idée d'une épouse infidelle.—Loin de marquer la Prostituée, comme une *Eglise corrompue*, nous avons montré clairement qu'il a pris des idées toutes contraires

166 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

Now, although, as I observed, the idolatrous Jews are frequently treated by their prophets as *fornicators*, as well as *adulterers*, nay, are much more frequently [z] re-
à celles-là, puis qu'au lieu de produire une *Jerusalem infidelle*, ou du moins une *Samarie*, autrefois partie du peuple saint, comme il auroit fait s'il avoit voulu nous représenter une eglise corrompue, il nous propose une *Babylone*, qui jamais n'a été nommée dans l'alliance de Dieu. Nous avons aussi remarqué qu'il n'avoit jamais donné à la Prostituée le titre d'épouse infidelle ou repudiée : mais que par tout il s'étoit servi du terme de *fornication*, et de tous ceux qui revenoient au même sens. Je sçais que ces mots se confondent quelquefois avec celui d'*adultere*, mais le fort du raisonnement consiste en ce que de propos délibéré Saint Jean évite toujours ce dernier mot qui marqueroit la foi violée, le mariage souillé, et l'alliance rompue, &c.—L'*Apocalypse avec une Explication* ; par Messire Jacques Benigne Bossuet, Evêque de Meaux. PREF. 26. 29. AVERTISEMENT, p. 321—323. Par. 1690, 12mo.

[z] The reason I take to be, That *fornication*, that is, vague lust and general prostitution, served best to express the unbridled and indiscriminate passion of the Jews for the dæmon-worship of their neighbours ; whereas the crime of *adultery*, though of a blacker dye, and, in that view, more proper to expose the malignity of their offence, does not convey the same ideas of universal pollution, being usually committed, *because* it is so criminal, with more distinction and restraint.

presented

presented under the former idea, than the *latter*; and although it be therefore true, that *fornication* is not necessarily and exclusively to be understood of Pagan idolatry, but may well be applied to Christian idolaters, as it was to the Jewish; yet the force of the learned objector's argument will not be obviated by this observation only. For the stress of it lies in this, "That the idolatry of Rome in the Revelations is *every where*, that is, purposely, termed *fornication* (to insinuate to us that the charge is directed against a Pagan City, and not a Christian Church), and *nowhere*, that is, purposely again, called *adultery*."

The objection is extremely ingenious; and, so far as I know, hath been hitherto unanswered. Yet, if any good reason can be assigned why the prophet should thus studiously prefer the term *fornication* to that of *adultery*, in describing the idolatry of Christian Rome, notwithstanding those terms be used indifferently by the Jewish prophets, when they reprove the idolatry

168: *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

of their own countrymen, the Bishop of Meaux would himself acknowledge that his objection falls to the ground.

Now such a reason offers itself to us in the EMBLEM under which St. John chuses to represent his idolatrous society. This emblem is *Babylon*; a Pagan idolatrous city to which the idea of *fornication* may be colourably, and hath in fact been applied [a], in order to express the transgression of the law of nature in its idolatrous worship: but to such a city *adultery* could in no proper sense be applied, because it had never entered into any close engagement, or *marriage contract*, as it were, with the God of heaven.

This being admitted, we see the reason, why Rome Christian is taxed as a *whore* simply, and not as an adulteress. For what had been improperly said of the *type* cannot, on the principles of decorum, be transferred to the *anti-type*. If Babylon be only a *harlot*, she is a harlot still, and

[a] Isaiah xxiii. 16, 17. Nahum iii. 4.

nothing

nothing more, when she stands for Rome, whether Pagan or Christian. The conninity of the figure, and the just correspondence of the thing signified to the sign, demands the observance of this rule; which cannot be violated without manifest absurdity and confusion.

“But why then, it is asked, was such an emblem employed? why was not Jerusalem, or Samaria (of which *adultery* might be predicated), rather chosen, than Babylon, for the type, or representation of *idolatrous Christian Rome*?”

The reason again is obvious. It was, because Babylon was the *first* of all idolatrous cities; and the *fittest* [b] to emblemize the enormous guilt, or to set in full light the extensive influence, of ido-

[b] —for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Jer. l. 38. Again: Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad. Jer. li. 7. Compare Rev. xvii.—the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

latrous

latrous Rome. For each in its turn was *the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*; the former corrupting the *heathen* world with her fornication; and the latter, the *Christian*.

When therefore for this, or the like reason, Babylon was made the emblem of Christian Rome, the prophet was obliged to retain the idea of fornication only, and not to interpose that of adultery, through the whole tenour of his application.

It may further be worth observing, that *pagan* idolatry is, for the most part, exposed by the antient prophets under the notion of *LYES*, or *LYING VANITIES* [c]; and very rarely, I think in no more than one or two short passages, under that of *fornication*. For vague lust was so generally practised in the heathen world, and the law of nature, condemning that vice, so little known, or respected by it, that the metaphor would not have conveyed to a Pagan idolater the atrocious nature of his crime.

[c] Mr. Mede, Works, p. 49.

The Mosaic Law, on the other hand, interdicting fornication in the severest terms, and requiring that *there should be no whore of the daughters of Israel* [d], the guilt of idolatry was very forcibly, as well as naturally, represented to a Jew under that idea.

Accordingly we find that the prophets every where, and in whole pages, employ this figure, when they address themselves to Jewish idolaters. Whence it may seem, that, although there be sufficient authorities to justify the prophet St. John in considering his emblematic Babylon under the idea of a *harlot*; yet he would not have prosecuted even this inferior charge of *fornication* so far as he has done, and in so many parts of his prophecy, if his purpose had not been to apply it to a *believing*, and not a Pagan city. If the mystical Babylon be *Christian Rome*, we see the force and propriety of this representation; which had clearly been less apt, if Pagan Rome, ac-

[d] Deut. xxiii. 17.

according to the Bishop of Meaux, had been intended by the prophet.

We see then, in both ways, why Rome is not an *adulteress* in the Revelations; and why she is so emphatically a *harlot*. The type employed forbade the *former* charge, though the anti-type be *Rome Christian*: The *latter* charge had not been so much laboured, if the anti-type had been *Rome Pagan*.

Thus, the edge of this acute objection is entirely taken off, and the execution, it was to make on the Protestant system, prevented.

To return now to the consideration of our *three* marks. These marks, it is said, agree to so many other powers, besides that of the Papacy, that they cannot be made the peculiar, distinctive characters of Christian Rome. And, without doubt, considered merely in themselves, they cannot. But, having already understood that the power, thus stigmatized, is a power seated in the *seven-billed* city, and that too an *ecclesiastical*

cal power, one sees clearly that, if the prophecies have hitherto received their accomplishment in any degree, these marks can only be sought in Papal Rome, and must be the proper, exclusive characters of that power. I say, *one sees this*; but, it must be owned, not without amazement, that a species of government, calling itself Christian, and professing to model itself on the example of the *Lamb*, on the pure and simple principles of the Gospel, should yet be all over stained with those specific vices which Christianity most abhors—the utmost pride of secular domination—the most relentless zeal against the rights of conscience—and, what is still more incredible, the most blasphemous idolatry. The accumulated infamy of these crimes struck the prophet, St. John, so forcibly, that, on the sight of this portentous monster, exhibited to him in the vision, *he wondered*, as himself expresses it, *with great admiration* [e].

[e] Rev. xvii. 6. ἰθαύμασα θαῦμα μέγα.

But,

174 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

But, strange as this vision appeared to the sacred *prophet*, the Papal history is found to realize all the wonders of it ; and, backward as *we* may be to interpret this vision of a church, professedly Christian, that church herself is so little scandalized at the imputation of these crimes, that she is ready to avow them all ; the *two first*, directly and openly ; and the *last*, when set in a certain light, and explained in her own manner. In short, she prides herself in the *extent of her sway* [*f*], and the *fire of*

[*f*] Not held of the civil power, or acknowledged to be so held, but usurped upon it, and insolently directed against it ; as is well known from ecclesiastical history. *The Pope is not Antichrist : God forbid !* (says the good Abbé Fleury, with a zeal becoming a member of the Papal communion). *But neither is he impeccable, nor has he an absolute authority in the church over all things both temporal and spiritual—Le pape n'est pas l'Antichrist ; à Dieu ne plaise ; mais il n'est pas impeccable, ni monarque absolu dans l'église pour le temporel et pour le spirituel* [4^{me} disc. sur l'hist. ecclesiastique, p. 173. Par. 1747, 12^o.]

The Pope, he says, *is not an absolute monarch in the church over all things temporal and spiritual* ; that is, he *ought not* to arrogate to himself the power of an absolute monarch ; for that the pope assumes to be such a mo-
her

ber zeal [g], and only quibbles with us about the meaning of the term, *idolatry*.

narch, and, in fact, exercised this supreme monarchical power in the church, through many ages, the learned and candid writer had indisputably shewn in the discourse whence these words are quoted. But now this *monarchical sovereignty in all things temporal, as well as spiritual*, is certainly one prophetic note or character by which the person or power, styled antichristian, is distinguished. Let the Pope then be what he will, we are warranted by M. Fleury himself to conclude, that he hath, at least, this mark of Antichrist.

[g] In the *persecution of hereticks*; which M. Bossuet regards as so little dishonourable to his communion, that he thinks it *a point not to be called in question*—calls the use of the sword, in matters of religion, *an undoubted right*—and concludes, that *there is no illusion more dangerous, than to consider TOLERATION as a mark of the true Church*—*l'exercice de la puissance du glaive dans les matieres de la religion & de la conscience; chose, que ne peut être revoquée en doute—le droit est certain—il n'y a point d'illusion plus dangereuse que de donner LA SOUVERAINE PUISSANCE pour un caractère de vraie Eglise*. Hist. des Var. l. x. p. 51. Par. 1740, 12°.

Thus this great doctor of the Catholic Church towards the close of the last century. And, just now, another eminent writer of that communion very roundly defends the *murder* of the Bohemian martyrs at Constance, and (what is more provoking still) the *fraud*.

To

176 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

To cut the matter short then, and to keep clear of those endless debates concerning the worship of *Images*, of the *Cross*, and of the *Host* in the celebration of the Mass; debates which a dextrous sophist may find means to carry on with a shew of argument, and with some degree of plausibility: to set aside, I say, all these topics, let it be observed at once, That *idolatry*, in the scriptural sense of the word, is of *two sorts*, and consists either, 1. in giving the honour due to the one true God, as maker and governor of the world, to any other supposed, though subordinate god; or, 2. in *and ill-faith* through which the pious and tender-hearted *Fathers* of that council rushed to the perpetration of it. *M. Crevier, Hist. de l'Université de Paris*, t. iii. l. vi. p. 435, &c. Par. 1761, 12^o.—Can it be worth while to spend words in fixing this charge of *intolerance* on the church of Rome, when her ablest advocates, as we see, even in our days, openly triumph in it? But then hath she forgotten who it was that the prophet *saw drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*—Rev. xvii. 6? Alas, no: but she wonders, by what figure of speech *heretics* are called *Saints*; and *rebels to the Pope*, *Martyrs of Jesus*.

giving the honour due to Christ, as the sole mediator between God and Man, to any other supposed, though subordinate, mediator. The *former* is the idolatry forbidden by the Jewish law, and by the law of Nature: the *latter* is Christian idolatry, properly so called, and is the abomination prohibited and condemned, in so severe terms, by the law of the Gospel.

Now, whether the *former* species of idolatry be chargeable on the church of Rome or not; and whether the *crime* of that species may not be incurred by honouring the true object of worship through the medium of some sensible image: whatever, I say, be determined on these two points (which for the present shall be set aside,) the *other* species of idolatry is, without all doubt, chargeable on any Christian church that shall adopt or acknowledge, in its religious addresses, another mediator besides Christ Jesus.

But the church of Rome (I do not say, in the private writings of her divines, but)

178 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

in the solemn forms of her ritual, *publickly professes*, and, by her canons and councils, *authoritatively enjoyns*, the worship of saints and angels, under the idea of mediators and intercessors; not indeed in exclusion of Christ, as *one*, or, if you will, as *chief* mediator, but in manifest defiance of his claim to be the *sole* mediator. This charge is truly and justly brought against that Church, as it now stands, and hath stood for many ages; and cannot, by any subterfuge whatsoever, be evaded [*b*]. And

[*b*] See Vitringa *Apocalyps. Exp.* p. 603, and the authors cited by him; but, above all, see Mr. Mede's exquisite and unanswerable discourse, entituled, *The Apostacy of the latter times*.

It is true, the Bishop of Meaux is pleased to divert himself with one part of this discourse; I mean, that part which contains [ch. xvi. and xvii.] the learned writer's interpretation of Daniel's prophecy concerning the Gods *Mabuzzim*. He finds something pleasant in this idea, or rather in this hard word, which he repeats so often, and in such a way, as if he thought the very sound of *Mabuzzim* was enough to expose the comment and Commentator to contempt. *Hist. des Var.* l. xiii. p. 260, 261. But, after all, the ingenious Prelate would have done himself no discredit by being there-

therefore, to the other characters of *Pride* and *Intolerance*, which she takes to herself with much complacency, she must now be content (whether she will or no) to have a little more serious in discussing an interpretation which Sir Isaac Newton adopts without scruple [*Obs. on the prophecies of Daniel*, &c. p. 192]; and which, in mere respect to the prophet, he should at least have condescended to replace by some other and more reasonable interpretation. But it is the infirmity of this lively man, to be jocular *out of season*. Thus, again, he raillies Luther, for an assertion of his, delivered, it seems, with some assurance, and in the form, as he pretends, of a prediction, *that the Papal power would speedily decline and come to nothing, in consequence of the Reformation*. The event, he says, has belied the prophet; the Pope still keeps his ground; and then (in an unlucky parenthesis) laughs to think, *how many others, besides Luther, will be dashed to pieces against this stone* — *bien d'autres, que Luther, se briseront contre cette PIERRE* [*Var. l. xiii. p. 244*]. Now, if the glory of saying a good thing had not infatuated this Catholic Bishop, could he have helped starting at his own comparison of a *stone*, as applied to Luther and the Reformation, when it might so naturally have put him in mind of that prophetic *stone*, which shall one day *become a great mountain, and break in pieces a certain IMAGE, and stand for ever* [Dan. ii. 35. 44.]?

that of DÆMON-WORSHIP, or ANTICHRISTIAN IDOLATRY, fastened upon her.

Nor let the followers of that communion think to elude this charge, by saying, *That they only request the saints, as we commonly do any good man, to pray for them* [i]. False, and disingenuous! False; because their breviaries and litanies shew, that they supplicate the saints to befriend them by their own inherent power, or to intercede for them to the throne of God by virtue of their own personal merits [k], in blasphemous derogation to the all-atoning and

[i] L'Eglise, en nous enseignant qu'il est utile de prier les Saints, nous enseigne à les prier dans ce même esprit de charité, et selon cet ordre de société fraternelle qui nous porte à demander le secours de nos freres vivans sur la terre; et le Catechisme du Concile de Trente conclut de cette doctrine, que si la qualité de Mediateur, que l'écriture donne à Jesus Christ, recevoit quelque préjudice de l'intercession des Saints qui regnent avec Dieu, elle n'en recevrait pas moins de l'intercession des fidèles qui vivent avec nous.

M. BOSSUET, *Exposition de la doctrine de l'Eglise Catholique*, p. 17, 18. Paris 1671.

[k] Vitranga, p. 603, 604.

incom-

incommunicable intercession of Jesus. *Dis-
ingenuous*, too; because they know very
well, that the question is concerning un-
seen and heavenly mediators only, not
men like ourselves, such as we live and
converse with on earth; whom we only ad-
monish of their duty, and to whom we only
do ours, when we call upon them to exert
an act of piety and common charity in
praying for their fellow-christians. Our
meaning is but that which the Apostle
well expresses, when he would have us *con-
sider one another, to provoke unto love and
to good works* [1]; and not at all to suppli-
cate our Christian brethren as powerful in-
tercessors, in whose meritorious virtues we
confide, and to whom, as possessing a pro-
per interest in the Almighty, by the worth
of their own persons, we commit our dearest
concerns, the forgiveness of our sins, and
the salvation of our souls.

“ But this, it will be said, is a very de-
fective, and even unfair, account of the

[1] Heb. x. 24.

182 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

matter. We do more than admonish our brethren of their duty, when we solicit their prayers for us. We invite them directly, and formally, to *intercede* for us to the throne of Grace. We are allowed, nay encouraged, to lay a stress on their intercession; and, what is more, we are given to understand that such intercession, especially if it be made by good men, will have weight and influence in heaven. What else is the meaning of the Apostle, when he assures us, *That the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* James v. 16? And, if the prayer of a *righteous man*, much more the prayer of glorified saints and angels."

I have put the argument, I think, in all its force, and (because the advocates of the papal cause affect to think it unanswerable) shall examine it with care.

"We apply to good Christians, or to those we esteem such, to intercede for us by their prayers to heaven." We do so; and are encouraged in this application, by
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the *example* and by the *directions* of the Apostles. For I shall not take advantage of what some have conceived to be the meaning of St. James, in the place alledged, where he attributes so much to the prayer of a righteous man, That the prayer there spoken of is *the prayer of faith*, or a spiritual gift miraculously conferred on the first teachers of the Gospel, and confined to their ministry: I will not, I say, take advantage of this gloss; because, whatever foundation it may seem to have in the context of that epistle, I allow it to be clear, from other places of the New Testament[m], That the duty of Christians is to pray, that is, to *intercede*, for each other.

But when I desire it may be observed,

1. What difference there is between desiring good men to pray for us, in the Gospel sense of that duty; and desiring Saints and Angels to pray for us, in the sense of the papal rituals. We request

[m] 1 Thess. v. 25. 1 Tim. ii. 1. and elsewhere, *passim*.

those prayers, only as they shall be offered up in the name, and through the merits, of the great, and, properly speaking, sole intercessor; and we look for no effect from them, but on that condition. The Church of Rome addresses herself to Saints and Angels, as *intercessors*, by, what we may call, their own right, by virtue of their own inherent sanctity; or rather she applies to them directly, as to *Saviours*, for their proper and immediate help, and expects it from the supposed privilege of their rank, or merits, independently of their *prayers*, or at least of the *manner* in which those prayers shall be presented through the name of Jesus. The formal words of their Litanies shew, that such is their meaning.

But they will say, that this condition of interceding, or saving, through the merits of Christ, is implied, though not expressed. I reply then,

2. That, admitting it to be so, there is, yet, the widest difference between *praying*
to

to Saints and Angels to pray for us, though in the Gospel forms of intercession; and merely *requesting* good men to pray for us, in those forms. The *latter* address is made in a way remote from all appearance of idolatry, and free from the suspicion of it: The *former* is preferred in the *place*, at the *time*, with the *posture*, in the *language*, in short, with all the circumstances and formalities of divine worship.

3. I observe, that, when we ask the prayers of men, we know that they hear our address to them: We cannot even suppose thus much of Saints and Angels, without ascribing to them the incommunicable attributes of the Almighty.

Still it may be insisted, That prayers, whether offered up to God by men, or glorified spirits, are however to be considered in the light of *Intercessions*; and that therefore, so far as we combat the practice of saint-worship on that ground, Protestants, as well as Papists when they employ the prayers of others, are guilty of idolatry.

This,

186 *Prophetic* CHARACTERS of *Antichrist*.

This, in truth, is the hinge on which the question turns: And, to shew the difference of the two cases palpably and clearly, I say,

Fourthly, and lastly, That the Gospel, in permitting, or rather in commanding, us to ask the prayers of each other, justifies this sort of intercession, and absolves it from the blame and guilt of idolatry. It gives a sanction to this mode of mediating with God by his Saints on earth; and does not regard it as a practice that interferes with the mediatorial office of Jesus in heaven.

The same Gospel, on the contrary (I inquire not for what reasons) says not a word, from which we can infer, that any such address is directed, or permitted, to be made to Angels or Spirits. It even condemns all addresses of this kind, under the opprobrious name of unauthorized, or WILL-WORSHIP [n]. Though we be allowed, then, to have good men, in some

[n] Coloss. ii. 88.

sense,

Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist. 187

sense, for our mediators or intercessors on earth, we are not allowed to have any mediator or intercessor in the tabernacle of heaven, but Jesus, the great high priest of Christians, only. This last sort of intercession, by angels and glorified Saints, is against the spirit and letter of our religion. It is a practice, which, not being enjoined, is forbidden; which, being disallowed, is reprobated. In a word, it entrenches on the incommunicable honour and prerogatives of the great, the appointed, the sole Mediator in heaven, seated at God's right hand, *who ever liveth to make intercession for us* [o]. It sets up new mediators without and against his leave; it is then unchristian, and *idolatrous*.

Thus at length, I suppose, it appears indisputably, That we are neither unreasonable nor uncharitable in charging IDOLATRY, as well as the other two antichristian vices of *pride* and *intolerance*, to the account of papal Rome.

[o] Heb. vii. 25.

188 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

V. The last prophetic mark of Antichrist, which I shall have time to point out to you, and what perhaps you may esteem the most material of all, is, *The TIME in which that power is said to make its appearance in the world.*

It hath been already observed [p], that the *chronology* of the prophecies is, for the most part, not defined with that exactness which we expect in historical compositions. It is commonly expressed in terms that may be interpreted with some latitude; or, when the date is more precisely delivered, we are still at a loss, in some respect or other, before the event, in what manner to form our calculation. However, the expression is not so loose and vague but that we may clearly apprehend *about* what time the predicted event will come to pass.

Thus, for instance, the season of Christ's *coming into the world* was fixed by such circumstances as these—that it should be

[p] Sermon VIII. p. 70—74. and Sermon IX. p. 104.

before

before the total dissolution of the Jewish state—or while the second temple was yet standing: And, when it was determinately foretold to be after the expiration of *seventy weeks*, from the going forth of the commandment to return and to build Jerusalem; still, besides the prophetic and somewhat obscure sense of the word *weeks*, we cannot beforehand calculate exactly *when* these weeks commence [q], or in what term they are to be accomplished. Yet, notwithstanding these uncertainties, the Jews saw

[q] “Whatsoever time of Messiah’s appearing Almighty God pointed out by Daniel’s *LXX Weeks*, “yet I believe not that any Jew, before the event, “could infallibly design the time without some latitude; because they could not know infallibly where “to pitch the head of their accounts, until the event “discovered it: yet in some latitude they might.” *Mede Works*, . 757.

And so in other instances. “I do not believe that “the Jews themselves could certainly tell from which “of their *three captivities* to begin that reckoning of “*LXX* years, whose end should bring their return “from Babylon, until the event assured them there- “of.” *Mede Works*, p. 662.

very

very clearly, and from them, the rest of the world conceived an expectation, that the person predicted was to appear in that age, or *about* that time, in which he did appear, and which, from the tenour of the prophecies, they had computed would be the time of his appearance.

In like manner, the season of Antichrist's appearance in the world is left to be collected from general intimations; and, when the duration of his tyranny is limited to *twelve hundred and sixty days*, besides that the expression, as before, is ænigmatical, we have no means of fixing the commencement of that period so precisely, but that some doubts may arise about it, till the accomplishment of the prophecy shall give light and certainty to the computation. Yet still, as in the former case, we have such *data* to proceed upon in calculating the reign of Antichrist, as may let us see *about* what time it was to be expected.

Thus

Thus much being premised, I have now only to remind you of what the prophets expressly declare concerning the rise of Antichrist. The eldest of these, the prophet Daniel, says, it was to be in the time of the *fourth* kingdom, that is, of the Roman; which, for the convenience of the prophetic calculations, is considered as subsisting, though in a new form, under the ten kings, among whom it was to be divided. He further tells us, that Antichrist was to arise from *among*, and *after*, the ten kings; that is, we are to look for him *then* (and not before) when the Roman empire has undergone that change of government [r].

Next, St. Paul, it seems, had told the Thessalonians, what it was that, for a time, prevented the appearance of Antichrist: but that information hath not been transmitted to us. However, he says to them—*Ye know WHAT withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time: and fur-*

[r] Dan. vii.

ther

192 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

ther adds, *HE, who now letteth, will let until he be taken out of the way* [s].

Now, by putting these passages together, and by comparing them with the predictions of Daniel, not we of these latter times only, before whom the *man of sin* is supposed to be evidently displayed, but the early fathers of the church, long before the events happened to which these prophetic notices could be applied, clearly saw, or at least generally conjectured, that the impediment here mentioned was the then subsisting power of the Cæsarean government; which, they said, was first to be taken away, and then Antichrist would be revealed [t].-

Lastly, the Apostle St. John not only confirms the prophecies of Daniel, that Antichrist should arise out of the ten kings, who were to have the western empire shared out among them, but adds

[s] 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

[t] Sermon VII. p. 15—17. But see especially Mede's Works, p. 657.

this remarkable circumstance, That he should *RIDE* the ten kings [*u*]; which implies, that he should *co-exist* with them. And it further appears, that he was to receive his whole power from them, and was finally to be destroyed by them.

Now, turn to the history of the *fourth* kingdom, and see how it corresponds to these prophecies. Observe, when the western empire under its Cæsarean head was taken away; how it was afterwards, dismembered by the northern nations; by what degrees it fell at length into *ten*, that is, *many* distinct, independent kingdoms; at what time this partition was made, or rather fully settled and completed. From this time, and not before, you are to look for Antichrist, now gradually rearing himself up among the ten kings; and at length in a condition, by the power which they gave to him, to *ride*, that is, to direct and govern them. From this time, again, compute the 1260 years, the predicted

[*u*] Rev. xvii. 7.

194 *Prophetic CHARACTERS of Antichrist.*

period of his government; and, keeping your eye all along on the ecclesiastical and civil state of our western world (the predicted theatre of all these transactions), see, if you can help concluding, I do not say at what precise time, but *about* what time, Antichrist appeared; see if the *commencement* of his reign be not so far determined as that you may be certain of its being long since past; and see, if very much, at least, of that allotted *period*, through which his dominion was to continue, according to the prophecies, be not, by the evident attestation of history, now run out.

To DRAW, then, what hath been said on the several marks of Antichrist, to a point. Consider, within *what part* of the world he was to appear; in *what seat* or throne he was to be established; of *what kind* his sovereignty was to be; with *what attributes* he was to be invested; in *what season*, or *about what time*, and for *how long a time*, he was to reign and prosper: Consider these FIVE obvious characters of Antichrist,

christ, which the prophets have distinctly set forth, and which, from them, I have successively held up to you; and, then, compare them with the correspondent characters, which you find inscribed, by the pen of authentic history, on a certain power, sprung up in the West, seated in the city of Rome, calling himself the Vicar of Christ, yet *full of names of blasphemy*, that is, stigmatized with those crimes which Christianity, as such, holds most opprobrious, the crimes of tyrannic dominion, of persecution, and even Idolatry; and lastly, now subsisting in the world, though with evident symptoms of decay, after a long reign, whose rise and progress can be traced, and whose duration, hitherto, is uncontradicted by any prophecy: Put, I say, all these correspondent marks together; and see if they do not furnish, if not an absolute demonstration, yet a high degree of probability, that apostate papal Rome is the very Antichrist foretold.

At least, you will admit that these correspondencies are signal enough to merit your attention, and even to justify your pains in looking further into so curious and interesting a subject. Ye will say to yourselves, That the prophecies concerning Antichrist deserve at least to be considered with care, since, in so many striking particulars, they appear, on the face of them, to have been completed.

This *conclusion*, it is presumed, is a reasonable one: And the end of this discourse will be answered, if ye are, at length, prevailed upon to *draw* this conclusion.

S E R M O N XII.

U S E S of this Inquiry into the
Prophecies.

REV. xxii. 7.

*Behold, I come quickly: Blessed is he that
keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this
book.*

BEFORE we engage in a work of
time and difficulty, we naturally ask,
“CUI BONO? to what considerable end
and purpose, are our labours to be re-
ferred?”

Although it may, then, be presumed,
that enough hath been said on the prophe-
cies, to excite a reasonable desire of look-
ing further into them, and even to produce
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SER.

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198 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

or may be understood; yet, it may quicken your attention to this argument, and support your industry in the prosecution of it, to set before you the *USES* which may result from a full and final conviction (if such should be the issue of your inquiries), That these prophecies are not intelligible only, but have, in many instances, been rightly applied, and clearly fulfilled.

These *USES* are very many. I shall collect, only, *two or three* of the more important, for your consideration.

Though every period of prophecy be instructive, that which takes in the great events and revolutions, which have come to pass in the *Christian Church*, is, for obvious reasons, more especially interesting to us, who live in these latter ages of the world.

Of the numerous predictions, contained in either testament, which, it is presumed, respect these events, the most considerable by far, because the most minute and circumstantial, are those of St. John in the

the *Revelations*; which treat professedly of such things as were to befall *the servants of Jesus* [a], from the prophet's own days down to that awful period, when all the mysterious councils of God, in regard to the Christian dispensation, shall be finally shut up in the day of judgement. To these predictions, then, a more particular attention is due, the rather because they have been fulfilling from the time of their delivery — *behold I come quickly* — and above all, because a *blessing* is pronounced on those, who *keep*, that is, who observe, who study and contemplate, *the sayings of this book*.

Affuredly, then, this study will be rewarded with signal benefits. And one sees immediately :

I. In the first place, that no small benefit must arise to those, who admit the completion of these prophecies, so far, I mean, as the tenour of the book makes it probable that they have been completed, *from*

[a] Rev. i. 1.

200 USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.

the awful sense which this conviction must needs give them of the Christian dispensation itself.

That this dispensation, ushered in by so long a train of prophecies, should still be attended by others, through all the stages and periods of it; that secular empires should rise and fall, unnoticed, as it were, by the spirit of God, while the kingdom of his Son is so peculiarly distinguished, and its whole history, in a manner, anticipated by the most express predictions; that Jesus should be, as he says of himself, *the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end* [b] of all God's religious dispensations to mankind; that his *first coming*, or personal appearance in the flesh, should be signified from the foundation of the world, and from time to time more explicitly declared in a variety of successive prophecies, till the great event, at length, fulfilled them all; and that, together with this event (the foundation of others, still more illustri-

[b] Rev. ii. 8. xxi. 6.

ous),

ous), his *second coming*, in the future and gradual manifestations of his power (for they were to be *gradual*), should be distinctly marked out, and duly accomplished, in the fortunes of the Christian church, or of that kingdom which he came to erect in the world ; while this subject, and no other, engaged the ultimate attention of all the prophets : There is, I say, in this scheme of things, something so astonishingly vast, something so much above and beyond the attention that was ever known to be paid to any other person or thing in the compass of universal history, as must strike an awe into the hearts of all men, who consider Christianity in this point of view ; and must compel the most negligent to confess, or suspect at least, That *such* a dispensation is a matter of no light moment, but, indeed, the most important in the eyes of providence, and the most interesting to mankind, that can be conceived, or expressed.

If then there be reason to *admit* the completion of such prophecies, respecting
such

202 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

such a subject, in any considerable number of instances, within that space of time which is already elapsed; and, therefore, to *expect* that the remaining prophecies will, in like manner, be fulfilled: The conclusion is, that the dispensation of God through Christ is of the last consequence to the inhabitants of this world: And the obvious *use* of this conclusion will be, that it further obliges all serious men, who have thus far profited by a study of the sacred oracles, to put that salutary question to themselves—*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation [c]?*

Connected with *this* use of prophecy,

II. A *second* is, That it sets before us, not the importance only, but the *truth* of Christianity, in the strongest light.

So many illustrious events falling in, one after another, just as the word of prophecy foretold they should, must afford the most convincing proof, That our Religion is, as it claims to be, of divine in-

[c] Heb. ii. 3.

stitution;

stitution; a *proof*, the more convincing, because it is continually growing upon us; and, the farther we are removed from the source of our religion, the clearer is the evidence of its truth. Other proofs are supposed to be, and, in some degree, perhaps, are, weakened by a length of time. But this, from prophecy, as if to make amends for their defects, hath the peculiar privilege of strengthening by age itself: till hereafter, as we presume, the accumulated force of so much evidence shall overpower all the scruples of infidelity; and bring about, at length, that general conversion both of Jew and Gentile, which the sacred oracles have so expressly foretold.

In both these ways, then, by impressing on the mind the most affecting sense of Christianity; that is, by giving us, *first*, the most *awful view of its pretensions*, and *then*, by producing the *firmest conviction of its truth*, the word of prophecy hath an evident tendency, in proportion as we see its accomplishment, to promote the great ends,

204 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

ends, for which it was given, till *the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and all the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness* [d].

These uses are general, and concern *all men* : The

III. *Next*, I shall mention, is more especially addressed to *thinking* and inquisitive men.

When the view of things, exhibited under the two preceding articles, has raised our admiration, to the utmost, of the divine councils, in contriving, preparing, and at length executing, so vast a scheme, as that of Christianity, for the benefit of mankind; we are led to expect that the *effect* will correspond to the *means* employed, and that a striking change will, at length, be brought about in the condition of the moral world.

But, in surveying the history of this new religion, the theme of so many prophecies, and the great, the favourite ob-

[d] Hab. ii. 14. II. xxvi. 9.

ject,

USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies. 1205

ject, if I may so speak, of divine providence, " some are not a little scandalized to observe that nothing hath come to pass in any degree equivalent to such an expence of forethought and contrivance; that, for a season, indeed, virtue and piety seemed to triumph, in the exemplary lives of the first converts to this religion, and in the overthrow of Pagan idolatry; but that this golden age was soon over; and that, now, for more than fourteen hundred years, the passions of men have kept their usual train, or rather have expatiated with more licence and fury in the Christian world, than in the Pagan; that idolatry, in all its forms, has revived in the bosom of Christianity; and, as to *private morals*, that this Religion has even made men worse than it found them, or, at best, of corrupt sensualists, has only made them intolerant and vindictive bigots; that, in a word, the *kingdom of heaven*, as it is called, has, hitherto, neither served to the glory of God, nor to the good of mankind; at least,

least, to neither of these ends, in the *degree* that might have been expected from such high pretensions."

The colouring of this picture, we will say, is too strong: but the outline, at least, is fairly given. The corruptions of the Christian world have been notorious and great; and though they are indeed the corruptions of men calling themselves Christians, and not the vices of Christianity, yet he, who the most dispassionately contemplates so sad a scene, can hardly reconcile appearances to what must have been his natural expectations.

Here, then, the prophecies of this book, I mean, of the Apocalypse, come in to our relief. This book contains a detailed account of what would befall mankind under this last and so much magnified dispensation. It foretells all that history has recorded. It sets before us the corrupt state of the Christian world in almost as strong a light, as that in which our indignant speculatist himself has placed it. But it, likewise,

likewise, opens better things to our view. It shews, that the *end* of this dispensation is to promote virtue and happiness; and that this end shall finally, but through many and long obstructions, be accomplished. It represents the cause of righteousness as still maintaining itself in all the conflicts, to which it is exposed; as gradually gaining ground, and prevailing, through the secret aid of divine providence, over all opposition, till it obtains a firm and permanent establishment; till *the Saints reign* (not in a fanatical, but in the sober and evangelical sense of that word, *reign*) *in the earth* [e]; till *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth* [f].

So far, then, as these prophecies appear to have been completed, they reconcile us to that disordered scene which hath hitherto been presented to us; and give repose to the anxious mind, in the assured hope of better things to come. The worst, that has *happened*, was foreseen;

[e] Rev. v. 10.

[f] Rev. xix. 6.

and

208 *Uses of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

and the best, that we *conceive*, will hereafter come to pass. Thus, the reasonable expectations of men are answered; and the honour of God's government abundantly vindicated.

IV. The *last* use, I shall suggest to you, is that which immediately results from the study of the Apocalyptic prophecies *concerning Antichrist*; I mean, *The support, that is hereby given to Protestantism against all the cavils and pretensions of its adversaries.*

For, if these prophecies are rightly applied to Papal Rome, and have, in part, been signally accomplished in the history of that church, it is beyond all doubt, that our communion with it is dangerous; nay, that our separation from it is a matter of strict duty. *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues* [g]—are plain and decisive words, and, if allowed to be spoken of that church, bring the con-

[g] Rev. xviii. 6.

troverſy between the Proteſtant and Papal Chriſtians to a ſhort iſſue.

I know, the advocates of Rome pretend, that, not a ſenſe of duty, but a *ſpirit of revenge* operates in the minds of Proteſtants, when they affect to lay ſo great a ſtreſs on the Apocalyptic prophecies. “*Reward her, even as ſhe rewarded you [b]*”—is, they ſay, another of their favourite texts, by which they take themſelves to be as much obliged, as by that which they ſo commonly alledge for quitting her communion. It is not, therefore, to cover themſelves from the imputation of ſchiſm, but, to authorize the vengeance they meditate againſt us, that we are ſtunned with the cry of Antichriſt and Babylon [i].”

To this charge I can only reply, That, if any Proteſtant writers have put that ſenſe on the words—*reward her, as ſhe rewarded you*—they muſt answer for their own te-

[b] Rev. xviii. 4.

[i] M. de Meaux: *L'Apocalypſe avec une explication. Adverſement aux Proteſtants*, p. 303, &c. Par. 1690.

210 *Uses of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

merity and indiscretion. They, who understand themselves, and the language of prophecy, disclaim the odious imputation. They say, That they neither admit the lawfulness of persecution in any case on the account of religion, nor have the least thought of instigating the Christian world to any sanguinary attempts against the Papacy. What the *event* may be in the councils of Providence, is another consideration: But they neither avow, nor approve, those principles which tend to produce it. They, further, insist, That the two passages under consideration, though, both of them, expressed in the *imperative* form, require a very different construction: That the language of prophecy *seems* very often to authorise what it only foretells; and to command that which it barely permits; that, therefore, the sense of such passages is to be determined by the circumstances of the case; that, where obedience is lawful, there the *preceptive* form may be admitted; but, where it is not, there
nothing

nothing more is intended than the certainty of the *event* : That this distinction is to be made in the present case ; for that Christianity doth not allow vindictive retaliations, or *holy wars*, for the sake of religion ; and that offensive arms, taken up in the cause of God (how confidently soever some have justified their zeal by the authority of the Jewish Law, ill-applied), are abominable and *antichristian*. Whence we rightly conclude, that—*reward her, as she rewarded you*—are words not to be taken injunctively ; while those other words—*come out of her, my people*—expressing nothing but what it was previously our duty to do, are very clearly to be so taken.

Lastly, We say, that the context, in the two places alledged, justifies this distinction. *Come out of her, my people. Why ? That ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* The reason is just, and satisfactory. *Reward her.* Why ? No reason is assigned, or could be assigned consistently with the spirit of the Christian religion.

212 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

religion. It only follows, *as she has rewarded you*—words, which express only the *measure*, and the *equitable grounds* of the allotted punishment, not the *duty* of Christians to inflict it.

I return, then, from the confutation of this cavil (the most plausible, however, as well as invidious, which the wit of Rome has started on this subject) to the conclusion, before laid down, That the completion of the Apocalyptic prophecies in the Papal apostacy, if seen and confessed, affords an unanswerable defence and vindication of the Protestant churches.

This conclusion, that THE POPE IS ANTI-CHRIST, and that other, that THE SCRIPTURE IS THE SOLE RULE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH, were the *two* great principles on which the Reformation was originally founded. How the *first* of these principles came to be DISGRACED *among ourselves*, I have shewn in another discourse [k]. It may now be worth while to observe, in one word, through

[k] Sermon VIII.

what

what fatal mismanagement the *latter* principle was even *generally* DISAVOWED and DESERTED.

When the Reformers had thrown off all respect for the Papal chair, and were for regulating the faith of Christians by the sacred scriptures, it still remained a question, *On what grounds those scriptures should be interpreted.* The voice of the church, speaking by her schoolmen, and modern doctors, was universally, and without much ceremony, rejected. But the Fathers of the primitive church were still in great repute among Protestants themselves; who dreaded nothing so much as the imputation of novelty, which they saw would be fastened on their opinions; and who, besides, thought it too presuming to trust entirely to the dictates of what was called *the private spirit.* The church of Rome availed herself with dexterity of this prejudice, and of the distress to which the Protestant party was reduced by it. The authority of these antient and venerable

214 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

interpreters was sounded high by the Catholic writers; and the clamour was so great and so popular, that the Protestants knew not how, consistently with their own principles, or even in mere decency, to decline the appeal which was thus confidently made to that tribunal. The Reformers, too, piqued themselves on their superior skill in antient literature; and were ashamed to have it thought that their adversaries could have any advantage against them in a dispute which was to be carried on in that quarter. Other considerations had, perhaps, their weight with particular churches: But, for these reasons chiefly, all of them forwardly closed in with the proposal of trying their cause at the bar of the antient church; and, thus shifting their ground, maintained henceforth, not that the scriptures were the sole rule of faith, but the scriptures *as interpreted by the primitive fathers.*

When the state of the question was thus changed, it was easy to see what would be
the

the issue of so much indiscretion. The dispute was not only carried on in a dark and remote scene, into which the people could not follow their learned champions; but was rendered infinitely tedious, and, indeed, interminable. For those early writings, now to be considered as of the highest authority, were voluminous in themselves; and, what was worse, were composed in so loose, so declamatory, and often in so hyperbolical a strain, that no certain sense could be affixed to their doctrines; and any thing, or every thing, might, with some plausibility, be proved from them.

The inconvenience was sensibly felt by the Protestant world. And, after a prodigious waste of industry and erudition, a learned foreigner [1], at length, shewed the inutility and the folly of pursuing the contest any further. In a well-considered discourse, *On the use of the Fathers*, he clearly evinced, that their authority was

[1] M. Daillé.

216 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

much less, than was generally supposed, in *all* points of religious controversy ; and that their judgement was especially incompetent in *those* points which were agitated by the two parties. He evinced this conclusion by a variety of unanswerable arguments ; and chiefly by shewing that the matters in debate were, for the most part, such as had never entered into the heads of those old writers, being, indeed, of much later growth, and having first sprung up in the barbarous ages. They could not, therefore, decide on questions, which they had no occasion to consider, and had, in fact, never considered ; however their careless or figurative expression might be made to look that way by the dextrous management of the controversialists.

This discovery had great effects. It opened the eyes of the more candid and intelligent inquirers : And our incomparable Chillingworth, with some others [*m*],

[*m*] Lord Falkland, Lord Digby, Dr. Jer. Taylor, &c.
took

took the advantage of it to set the controversy with the church of Rome, once more, on its proper foot; and to establish, for ever, the old principle, THAT THE BIBLE, and that only (interpreted by our best reason), IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.

Thus, ONE of the two pillars, on which the Protestant cause had been established, was happily restored. And, though Mr. Mede, about the same time, succeeded as well in his attempts to replace the OTHER; yet, through many concurring prejudices, the merit of that service hath not, hitherto, been so generally acknowledged. Whether *the Pope be the Antichrist of the prophets* is still by some Protestants made a question. Yet, it seems as if it would not continue very long to be so: And it may not be too much to expect, that this institution will, hereafter, contribute to put an end to the dispute.

The Reformation will, then, be secured against the two invidious charges of SCHISM
and

218 *USES of this Inquiry into the Prophecies.*

and HERESY (for *neither* of which is there any ground, if *the Pope be Antichrist*, and if *the sole Rule of faith to a Christian be the canonical scriptures*), and will, thus, stand immoveably on its antient and proper foundations.

In saying this, I do not, however, mean to assert, that the Reformation has no support, but in this principle — *that the Pope is Antichrist*. There are various other considerations, which are decisive in the controversy between us and the Papists. So that, if the prophecies should, after all, be found to suit any other person or power, better than the Roman Pontif, we shall only have one argument the less to urge against his pretensions ; and the Protestant cause, in the mean time, stands secure. But, on the supposition that the prophecies are rightly, and must be exclusively, applied to the church of Rome (of which every man will judge for himself, from the evidence hereafter to be laid before him) ; on this supposition, I say, it must be allowed

lowed that the shortest and best defence of the Protestant cause is that which is taken from the authority of those prophecies, because they expressly enjoin a separation from that society to which they are applied.

Ye perceive, then, in all views, the utility of studying this prophecy of the *Revelations*, provided there be reason to admit the completion of it in the history of the Christian Church, and particularly in the history of Papal Rome. The *importance* and the *truth* of Christianity will be seen in their full light — The *wisdom* of the divine councils, in *permitting the Apostacy to take place for a time*, will be acknowledged — And the *honour* of our common *Protestant profession* will be effectually maintained.

CON-

C O N C L U S I O N.

THIS LECTURE is now brought down to that point, from which, possibly, ye expected me to set out. But, in the entrance on an argument, new to many persons, and misunderstood by most, it seemed expedient to take a wide compass. The true *scriptural idea* of the subject was to be opened at large [*n*]; the *general argument* from prophecy, enforced [*o*]; the *method* of the prophetic system deduced, and further illustrated in a view of the prophecies more immediately respecting the Christian church [*p*]; of *those* prophecies, those concerning *Antichrist, or the apostacy of Papal Rome*, were to be cleared of all prejudices and objections [*q*]; and the *principles*, on which the *Apocalyptic* prophecies, in particular, are to be explained, proposed and justified [*r*]: It was, further, necessary to

[*n*] Sermon. I. II. III.[*p*] Sermon. V. VI.[*r*] Sermon. IX. X.[*o*] Sermon. IV.[*q*] Sermon. VII. VIII.

bespeak

bespeak your attention to the *argument* from the Apocalyptic prophecies, especially, concerning Antichrist, by shewing the several presumptions there are of its *force* [*s*]; and by setting before you the *uses* to which this whole inquiry may be applied [*t*].

This preliminary course, then, though it has been tedious, will not be thought improper, if it may serve, in [any degree, to prepare and facilitate the execution of the main design, which is, *To interpret and apply particular prophecies*: A work, of labour indeed; but not unpleasant in itself; and (if carried on with that diligence and sobriety, which are, in reason, to be supposed) capable, I think, of affording to fair and attentive minds the fullest satisfaction.

The SEASON, I know, may be thought unfavourable to such an attempt. For the main stress must be laid on prophecies, about which Christians themselves are not

[1] Serm. XI.

[1] Serm. XII.

agreed,

agreed, at a time when the number of those persons is supposed to be very great, and increasing every day, who are not easily brought to acknowledge the reality of *any* prophecies.

This *last* would be an unwelcome consideration, if the fact were certain ; I mean, if the present state of religion were altogether such as some, perhaps, wish, and as others too easily apprehend, it to be. But I hope, and believe, it is not ; the truth of the case, so far as I am able to form a judgement of it, being no more than this : A few fashionable men make a noise in the world ; and this clamour, being echoed on all sides from the shallow circles of their admirers, misleads the unwary into an opinion, that the irreligious spirit is universal and uncontrollable. Whereas the good and wise are modest and reserved ; having no doubt themselves concerning the foundation of their faith, they pay but little regard to the cavils which empty or corrupt men throw out against it.

They

They either treat those cavils with a silent contempt; or, they lament in secret the libertinism of the age, without taking any vigorous measures to check and oppose it. Besides, they rarely come into what is called, *free company*; and they are too well employed, and at the same time too well informed, to hearken after every idle publication on the side of irreligion.

For these, and the like reasons, the number of true believers is overlooked; or thought to be less considerable than, in fact, it is, and would presently be known to be, if a just estimate were taken of them.

Let me then, under this persuasion, express myself in the spirit, and almost in the words, of an antient apologist [*u*].—"Let

[*u*] Verum non est desperandum. Fortasse, *non canimus surdis*. Nec enim tam in malo statu res est, ut desint sanæ mentes, quibus et veritas placeat, est monstratum sibi rectum iter et videant et sequantur. *Laſant. Div. Inſt.* l. v. p. 317. ed. Sparke.

"no

“ no man too hastily despair of the cause
“ we are now pleading. When we stand
“ up in its defence, there are those who
“ will lend an ear to us. For, whatever
“ the vain, or the vicious, may pretend,
“ the prophetic writings are not fallen so
“ low in the esteem of mankind, but that
“ there are numberless persons of good sense
“ and serious dispositions, who wish to see
“ the truth of the Gospel confirmed by
“ them; and are ready to embrace that
“ truth, when fairly set before them, and
“ supported by the clear evidence of
“ historical testimony and well-interpreted
“ scripture.”

Such is the language, which I am not
afraid to hold to the desponding party
among us. But, should my confidence, or
my candour, transport me too far, should
even *their* apprehensions be ever so well
founded; the zeal of those, who preach
the Gospel, is not to abate, but to exert
itself with new vigour under so discourag-
ing a prospect. If there be a way left to
strike

strike conviction into the hearts of unbelievers, it must, probably, be by pressing this great point of prophetic inspiration, and by turning their attention on a *miracle*, now wrought, or ready to be wrought before their eyes. Or, let the event be what it will, our duty is, to illustrate the word of prophecy, and to enforce it; to withstand the torrent of infidelity with what success we may; and, if it should prevail over all our efforts, to make full proof, at least, of our sincerity and good-will.

In the mean time, it becomes all *others* to retain and cultivate in themselves a respect for the prophetic writings; which either are, or, for any thing that has yet appeared, may be divine. To treat them without the fullest conviction of their falshood, with neglect and scorn, is plainly indecent, and may be highly criminal and dangerous.

Josephus tells us, that in 'the last dreadful ruin of his unhappy countrymen, it

VOL. II.

Q

was

was familiar with them, *to make a jest of divine things, and to deride, as so many senseless tales and juggling impostures, the sacred oracles of their prophets*[w]; though they were then fulfilling before their eyes, and even upon themselves.

But the case, perhaps, is different; and *we* have no concern in the prophecies concerning papal Rome.

What! Have *we* no concern in those prophecies (supposing, I mean, that they are prophecies at all, and that there is reason for applying them to the church of papal Rome), *We*, who have but just been delivered from the more than Egyptian bondage, which they predict; and are, therefore, bound by every tie of interest, of gratitude, and of charity, to assert to ourselves, and to communicate to others, as far as we are able, the blessings of *that*

[w] Ἐγγλῶτο δὲ τὰ θεῖα, καὶ τὰς τῶν προφητῶν θεσμὸς ὅσπερ ἀγρυπνίας λογοποιίας, ἐχλευάζον.

Fl. Joseph. B. J. I. iv. 6.

liberty,

liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free[x]? Have we no concern in the several *uses*, mentioned in this discourse; and in many others, which I have not mentioned; it being well known, that *all inspired scripture* (of which prophecy is so eminent a part) is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*[y]?

Or, supposing that we had no *direct* concern in these prophecies, and supposing, farther, that the divine authority of them was even *problematical*; still it may deserve to be considered, I mean by men the most libertine, who have not yet convinced themselves, by an exact and critical inquiry, of their utter falshood and insignificancy; I say, it merits the reflexion of all such, That the *contempt* of the prophecies, under these circumstances, has a natural tendency to corrupt the temper, and harden the heart. And is there no room to question, whe-

[x] Gal. x. 1. [y] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

ther this conduct, plainly an *immoral* conduct, be adviseable or safe?

Let us then, on a principle of *self-love*, if not of piety, *keep the sayings of this book*, concerning THE MAN OF SIN. From many appearances, the appointed time for the full conpeltion of them may not be very remote. And it becomes our prudence to take heed that we be not found in the number of those, to whom that awful question is proposed—*How is it that ye do not discern the signs of this time?*

Nay, there are prophecies, which, in that case, may concern us more nearly than we think. St. Paul applied ONE of these to the unbelieving Jews; of whose mockery, and of whose fate, ye have heard what their own historian witnesseth: And, if we equal their obdurate spirit, *that* prophecy may clearly be *applied*, and no man can say, that it was not *intended* to be applied, to *ourselves*.

Beware

Beware therefore (to sum up all in the tremendous words of the Apostle [z]); *Beware, lest that come upon you, which is spoken by the Prophets*: BEHOLD, YE DESPISERS, AND WONDER AND PERISH; FOR I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK, WHICH YE SHALL IN NO WISE UNDERSTAND, THOUGH A MAN DECLARE IT UNTO YOU.

[z] Acts xiii. 40, 41.

T H E E N D.



